ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE

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Stop Motion & Motion Capture

The Politics of Performance Animation

Foam Puppet Frabication Explained

Barry Purves Throws Down the Gauntlet

Little Big Estonia

Inside Medialab

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Cover: *Motion-capture animation technology makes anything possible. Protozoa created a 3-D "Virtual Bill Clinton" for a special on MTV called, "The State of Music Videos," which aired on the cable network after the President's annual "State of the Union" address on January 27, 1998. MTV plans to use the real-time animated character for live broadcast in the future. The "Virtual Bill" image is courtesy of and © MTV Networks.*

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

by Heather Kenyon

Animation and its many changing faces...

It continues to stun me how the world of animation techniques continue to grow. When I first sat down with the editorial calendar, now almost nine months ago (where did that time go...), I thought the subjects of stop-motion and motion-capture were a very odd pairing indeed. Sure, they are both forms of 3-D animation but one revolves around high-tech gear and computer programmers and the other around small models and sets. However, this has turned out to be one of the most interesting issues for me. I know I say this every month, but this time, while compiling the issue, I found myself drawing an amazing number of correlations between the two techniques and about the meaning of animation as a whole.

Our lunch with Chris Walker and Corky Quakenbush was an eye-opener. By the time we left, we realized that they are both walking down a narrow alley in-between the worlds of animation and live-action. Moreover, they are probably slowly heading toward one another as new innovations arise. Both shoot scenes almost like a live-action sitcom and move the camera, a là live-action. Plus, both were drawn to their particular techniques partially because of the tangible feeling that accompanies 3-D animation. Their love of animation and live-action was also revealed as they frequently spoke of live-action feature films. Unlike most of our guests, they have both included quite a few live-action feature films on their Desert Island lists.

What I found especially fascinating though was their definitions of animation. No longer are we speaking about a standard definition of "frame by frame manipulation." Rather, they agreed that live-action scenes that both create "magical worlds" or "hyper-realism" can be defined as animation as long as they "feel" animated. I think as time goes on this is going to be a more and more interesting question. (If I call you for an interview...be prepared.) The lines between live-action and animation are blurring as we forge into the areas of photorealistic 3-D, amazing special effects and motion-capture. When we combine these techniques with more traditional ones, an even wider array of choices appear. For instance, I walked into Medialab expecting to find the performance animators to be out-of-work Los Angeles actors. However, what I found were highly-skilled puppeteers who were applying this "old" technique to a new technology.

And then there is Gregory Peter Panos' article. When I first read his article I thought, "Copying Bill Clinton, right. You can't do that. Someone wouldn't allow that." Well, even before we went to print I was proven wrong by MTV's special, "The State of Music Videos." I think we are in for a wild and wooly ride when it comes to future applications of motion-capture. Just as the President of France, Jacques Chirac, recently called for a world-wide ban on cloning a human being, will we one day call for a ban on digitally cloning a human being? What havoc could someone with enough money, and motive, cause? Will we ever be able to trust our eyes again? Of course, Hollywood's high-concept feature films are already there with Wag the Dog. Everyone scoffs and says the plot is highly unlikely, but then there's people out there that still believe what they see in out-of-context video clips is the truth.

When I was an intern at Turner Feature Animation and doing script coverage, they told me that one of my highest considerations was whether or not a property was "animatable." Did it contain magic, mystery, the supernatural; an element that truly merited being animated as opposed to being filmed in live-action. I always went forth and looked for morphing pink elephants, werewolves, etc., but now it seems that with special effects, live-action people are asking themselves, 'How can we add a little magic, a truly unexpected surprise?' The answer seems to be coming back much more often, 'Animation!' in all of its hybrid forms.

I tell you, every month I sit here the magazine seems to get smaller because the arena of animation grows and I want to include everything. Where will it end? Nobody knows...and that's why it is so much fun to be sitting here, right now.

Until next time,
Heather

editor@awn.com

The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund Needs You!

1997 will be remembered as a turbulent and exasperating year in the on-going battle to protect the First Amendment rights in the comics industry. In June, Mike Diana became the first American artist convicted of obscenity. Incredibly, his parole conditions forbade him from drawing "obscene" images even in the privacy of his own home. In September, despite our staunch willingness to defend them, the owners of Planet Comics pled guilty to felony charges for selling an adult comic book to consenting adults.

If this sounds like the battlefield is getting tougher, you're right. The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF) exists to fight censorship and to protect the First Amendment rights of everyone in the comics community. But we can't continue the fight without your help.

Since 1990, the CBLDF has successfully defended this industry's right to create and sell comics responsibly, without interference. These legal battles cost serious money. In the last four years, we've raised over $500,000 to preserve the First Amendment freedoms of all comics professionals. Unfortunately, our legal fees and operating costs for this period are more than $520,000.

It's been a tough and expensive year for the CBLDF, and our financial reserves are dangerously low. It's more important than ever that you help replenish our treasury, the battle to secure our First Amendment rights is far from over.

I know you're busy with your everyday personal and business demands. But I also know you support our efforts. You may not be able to join us in the trenches, but you can help a great deal. By making a contribution, you directly help the CBLDF continue to fight the good fight. Please send your tax-deductible donation to:

The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
PO Box 693
Northampton, MA 01061

Anything you can give will be greatly appreciated and will make a difference. Thank you and Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Denis Kitchen
President

You can now check out The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund's web site by visiting Animation World Network's Village and looking under Non-Profit Organizations. For more background on the organization read Susan Alston's Censorship In Comics: Is This the United States? which appeared in our July 1997 Comics issue.

Setting the Record Straight

Alex Williams' excellent commentary for your magazine (Williams 1.10) on the sad fate of his father's magnum opus, The Thief & The Cobbler, (Williams 2.2) has just been brought to my attention and I (belatedly) thank him for it and congratulate him on it, with one reservation. Contrary to what was printed at the end of the article, Richard did not write the screenplay by himself nor do any versions of the screenplay, the film, or the video list him as sole writer. Richard's a brilliant animator but he was the first to admit that he was no writer. As co-writer, I struggled through collaboration on that screenplay, assisted at voice-over sessions and rewrote and fine-tuned the script with and for Richard over several years. Alex was only seven when the collaboration began; perhaps he was unaware of it or simply forgot, but Richard and I held joint copyright on The Thief from 1974 right up until the project was sold to Warner Bros. for final production. In the greater artistic consideration of what happened to the animation itself, it may, in fact, be of no consequence to anyone but me that the story, the characters, the plot and the dialogue of The ("real") Thief & The Cobbler represent several years of serious involvement on my part. However, I feel compelled to set the record straight.

Margaret French Williams
Los Angeles, California

Thanks A Bunch

Just a note to tell you how much I enjoy your animation site. The more I browse your zine the more I really get excited and informed. I can't tell you how much I appreciate your company for sharing such great information and links for us.

A fellow clay artist from Australia, Pamela Irving, and I are hoping to do a "claymation" cartoon next year based on a famous character she created for the city of Melbourne. Reading your online zine has given both of us hope that we will be able to accomplish this goal and get distribution. Thank you for furnishing this site to us. Keep up the great work. It has become my absolute favorite.

Sincerely,

Charles Spillar
Irving & Spillar Entertainment

Who's Data Is That Anyway?

by Gregory Peter Panos

A long time from now, your data will mean a great deal to you. Kind of ironic isn't it? You've been dead for over 100 years and they are still using data gathered from you, while you were alive, to keep you in existence.

For a movie star, political figure, athlete and other famous persons, this is becoming a very real scenario. Initially the famous and rich will be digitizing their 3-D forms, actions, motions, voices, gestures, and eventually their life stories, with the specific objective of creating a robust database, ostensibly for the creation of a realistic construct of what? Themselves, of course!

A realistic rendition of Bill Clinton has been animated with motion-capture by Protozoa for a spoof on MTV, proof that anyone can be digitally "cloned." Image courtesy of and © MTV.

An Era of Digital People

Today, motion capture is being used to save money, time and add realism to human animation and characters for feature films, episodic television and commercials. Occasionally, 3-D digitizing, used to capture a person's shape and body, aid in the quest for simulated digital realism. This is all still new to most producers and directors, but their ambitious goals to create fully directable virtual actors ties a common thread among them.

While we speak, the rights to other famous dead persons are being bought, sold and licensed for eventual digital re-animation.

Performance Animation is a term that describes a situation where a live human performer animates a digital character in real-time. Motion-Capture, on the other hand, only describes the recording process for physical movement of a live person. Performance Animation embodies a more complete attribution of the creative process to the live human, while motion capture strips away the person and boils down their data into a distilled stream of numbers, a mere effigy of the life that created it. Performance Capture is a more polite term which is beginning to catch on, and attempts to join the world of cold, lifeless data extraction, with the world of warm, living, spontaneous creative energy.

Ownership of Data

These terms, and the evolving technologies that support them, are moving toward an era when they will be deployed for purely personal reasons by the same people who are the subject of such digitizations now. Today, if a producer pays to have an actor's performance or rehearsal motion captured, and the actor is paid according to scale for their efforts, the person who pays for it 'owns' the data. This is not completely true however when it comes to 3-D shape digitization of an actor. In this case, the person who pays for the 3-D process might own the data and the media that it is stored on, but the easy determination of actual 'likeness' prevents them from using this data in any way toward commercial intentions

without their express consent or that of their estate or heirs. This is good that our senses rule here, however, many believe that our heirs or estate could never anticipate our feelings about how our data might be used.

It seems that the concept of "likeness" has been highly developed as a strong legal point that is easily proven and defended from piracy, unauthorized uses and exploitation. Motion captured human data has not yet achieved this same status for a numbers of reasons. It is not yet common that we will discern one person's movement as distinctly different from another persons through visual analysis. However, on rare occasion, an action, such as Michael Jackson's dancing which was recently captured digitally, clearly appears to represent a person's likeness when displayed through even the most primitive stick figure animation tests. For the majority of most actors who perform physically for a motion capture session, they don't retain any rights to this data. For more distinguishable, name value performers, their motions might quickly be recognized by a majority of culturally experienced viewers. Therefore, recognizable stars' motions can allow them to assert their legal rights to their data more easily. These stars may see greater value in the existence of such data as an asset that they own and can control and few will question that it is a precious commodity to them.

Motion capture suits like this are used to track an actor's motion, which can then be applied to a digital character. Photo courtesy of and © Polhemus.

Ownership of one's data would seem like an easy thing for a digitized person to establish, be it in 3-D shapes, body motions, facial expressions, voice recordings or in a variety of other forms. The logic goes, "It's data of me so it must be mine, right?" Wrong! This legal issue has not yet been dealt with in the courts, but it will soon rise to see the day.

Virtually Famous

We've already seen the likenesses of Bill Clinton, Fred Astair, Ed Sullivan, George Burns and others used in various ways for television commercials and feature films. While we speak, the rights to other famous dead persons are being bought, sold and licensed for eventual digital re-animation. This activity rings a variety of bells in people's heads: some are horrified, some think it's cute and fun, while others figure, "Hey, they're dead, so who cares anyway!" The truth is that this activity is not being treated any differently than licensing a person's likeness in the conventional way.

Pictures, artist renderings, sculptures and other forms of visual documentation are well established as viable media for licensing a person's likeness. It is only a matter of time before the new technologies used to create more robust, resolute, time-variant documentation of a person will be as universally accepted with the same validity as more conventional mediums such as photography. It won't only be the rich and famous that are rushing to get themselves scanned and digitized in the 3-D studios of tomorrow's photographers.

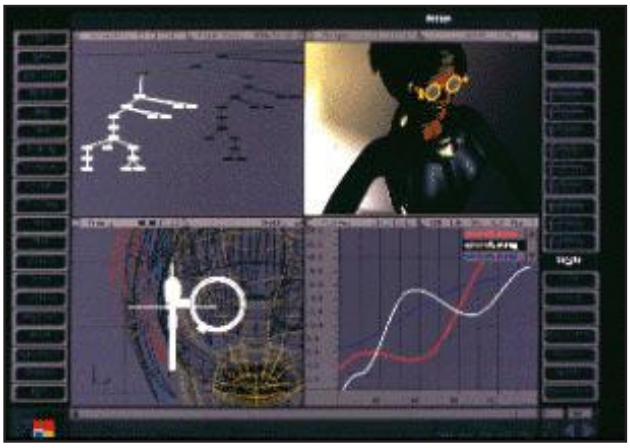
Freeze, Please!

There are a number of 3-D shape digitizing technologies that are beginning to appear on the commercial horizon for creative types to adopt. Eventually, 3-D cameras will be inexpensive, fast, compact and effective. Everyone will have one. Home computers will easily accept 3-D camera data and be able to animate and use this data as components in virtual worlds that are populated by virtual people. Just think what the "paparazzi" and the tabloids will be doing with these new toys! It boggles the mind and will keep lots of "rights lawyers" busy for years to come.

We risk losing the joy of seeing our children interact with their simulated grandparents long after they are gone...

"Was that actually you there, doing that, or was that your virtual construct?" the Judge will ask. A jury of robots and expert witnesses will measure and sample and compare data before rendering their verdict to the court. "Will the bailiff please read the verdict?" "Not virtual," the bailiff will reply and thus, the accused will slump down in their chair with their head bowed in silence.

Do we remember that President Bill Clinton was upset that his likeness was used in a scene in the recent movie Contact that did not depict his actions accurately? Well Billy Boy, you just wait 'til some sneaky photographer snaps you in 3-D shaking hands and kissing



This screen shot shows the movement points and motion controls used by animators running the 3-D program Softimage for Windows 95/NT. © Softimage

babies! Some day all hell will break loose when data gets used in the wrong way. This presents a very serious potentially real threat to our common belief that, "If you see it, it's the truth, right?" It's his data all right, but it's the wrong virtual world and the wrong time. "That wasn't me!" Sorry Bill, maybe next election they'll know it was just a simulation?

When it becomes easy and affordable, we will all digitize ourselves in some comfortable place created to do just this without a thought...

The Virtual World to Come

Well, what should we do? Restrict and legislate this activity? If we do, we risk losing the joy of seeing our children interact with their simulated grandparents long after they are gone or learning from our ancestors first hand where we came from with all the depth, breadth and beauty that such interaction implies. Should we miss leaving behind our own approved, optimized, ideal version of our self by which we'd rather be remembered? When it becomes easy and affordable, we will all digitize ourselves in some comfortable place created to do just this without a thought and we'll encourage our loved ones to "get scanned" as well!

Some of us will go on to become famous in our lifetime, loved or hated by all. Some will be unknown in life but famous only in death. Others will fade into obscurity, occasionally to be purchased and inserted as a player in a scene in a virtual world acting out some story written by a child. A myriad of other potential situations exist and all of them will be possible as we make our way toward the future of the virtual self.

Thus is the folly of man: to expand, condense, abstract, extrapolate, accept and deny his own immortality through pictures, bodies of work, 3-D data, self-simulation and future concepts as yet unrealized. So it will be for all of us in the virtual world to come.

Link to the Performance Animation Society web site through AWN's Animation Village, on the Internet at http://www.awn.com/awneng/village.html.

Gregory Peter Panos is Founding Co-Director of, and Director of Administration for, the Performance Animation Society.

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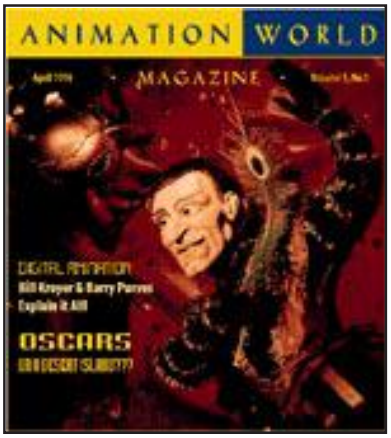
Boldly Throwing Down the Gauntlet

by Barry J.C. Purves



Editor's Note: In the April 1996 issue of Animation World Magazine, *Barry Purves brought us, "The Emporer's New Clothes." Nearly two years later Barry's article is still one of the most popular. With his latest installment we find that maybe he's not a Luddite after all.*

"Hey, didn't you used to be in animation?"

"I still am....it's the animation that got...computerized!"

Apologies to Norma Desmond, but that was the rough theme of the last article I wrote here, nearly two years ago. I'd just returned to England after the unique experience that was *Mars Attacks!* and was facing a struggle to get established and funded in the UK again. In some respects, things have not changed. In practical terms, the only animation I have done has been as an 'understudy' covering animators on holidays and such. I have written and developed about ten films, and though there is interest in some, nothing specific has been signed and sealed. I am itching to get behind a camera again.

But fear not, this article will hopefully not be as bitter or as angry as the last one. Two years has given me plenty of time to be philosophical about all the changes around me. Norma Desmond may never have worked again in the 'new' sound era, and who knows, I may never get to direct and animate puppets again in this new 'CG' era, but at least I have admitted that CG animation is pretty damn amazing. There are things being produced that really could not be done with puppets; *Jurassic Park - The Lost World, Alien: Resurrection* and *Men in Black* bear witness to that. *Titanic* is the perfect example of breathtaking CG effects working for a film and not the other way around.

Room for CG

Given the chance I would not say 'no' to working with CG characters. (Hey, I would not say 'no' to working!) I certainly would not have said that two years ago, when I was totally haughty about CG. The main reason for this change of attitude is that this spectacular hiatus in my career has given me the chance to accept some very generous offers to go 'round the world doing talks, workshops and being on the jury of many festivals. One of these offers came from Blue Sky in New York. Very kindly, Henry Anderson asked me to lead some acting classes with his computer class. In return, I got to spend some time working closely with his CG animators on *Alien: Resurrection.* I clearly had the better bargain there. This was a real Road to Damascus conversion for me, as I could see that the animators and I shared the same goal, which was to get a good acting performance out of the characters. We may have shared the same goal, but not the same language. Terms tripped easily off their tongues and had me rushing to my CG translation dictionary! I did feel very at home at this studio, unlike another nameless studio, who seemed overjoyed at having spent months developing the software to reproduce the exact texture of a pencil. "Hang on a minute," I felt like saying. What was wrong with the pencil itself?

CG is good for making the fantastic seem real, whereas puppets are more suited for making the fantastic seem credible, which is not the same at all.

So, I have generally come to the conclusion that it is horses for courses. The wonderful characters in *James and the Giant Peach* would not have worked as well in CG, and I don't think after *Jurassic Park* that we can, or should, ever accept a model animated dinosaur again. The only worry is if CG

becomes the exclusive form of animation. Perhaps, it's as easy as saying CG is good for making the fantastic seem real, whereas puppets are more suited for making the fantastic seem credible, which is not the same at all.

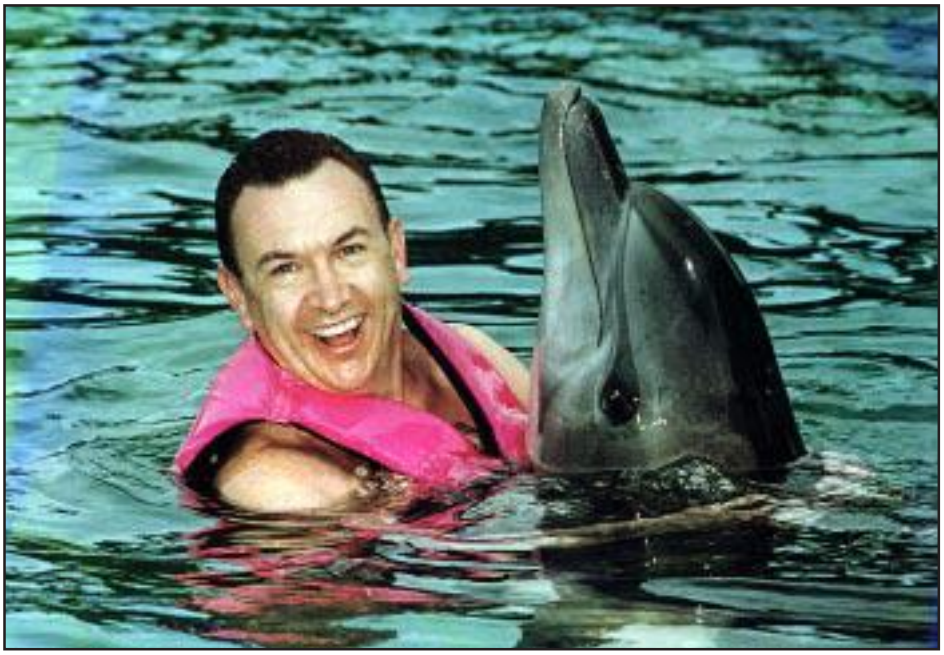
A half-finished degree film is not, as some students are encouraged to believe, an instant passport to a successful career.

Time for Teaching

Whether I can find a place in the CG world I don't know, but in the last two years I have had great satisfaction from doing an enormous amount of teaching in various film and art colleges around the world. I certainly enjoy working with students and enjoy their response, but I am constantly alarmed by the lack of any real tuition that is evident in some colleges. Some students looked at me blankly as I spoke about single frame and film grammar. Too often I have seen the pressure on the students to churn out a film, any film. Sadly, more often than not, the films are a disaster because there has been so little preparation and nothing has been thought through. All the storyboards that are proudly shown to me have been masterpieces of graphic design, but contain no graphical information about the film and are certainly not useful in getting the film made. I can't help feeling that the emphasis is drastically wrong in many schools. In the rush to make a film to impress their tutors, the students do not have the time or patience to learn the very basic skills of animation and film grammar. As a future employer I would without a doubt choose a student who had made a small, simple film that was told concisely and clearly, over a student who had made a complex, ambitious film that failed to communicate anything.

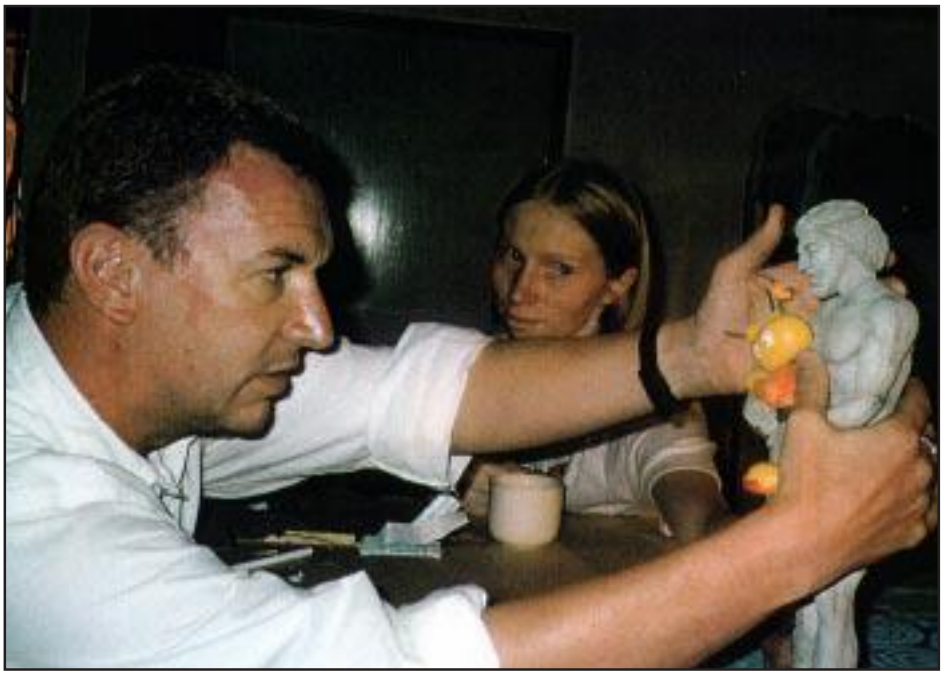
Leaving these film schools, I always feel a little sad and mean-spirited that after their generosity in getting me there, all I can do is criticize the way things are run. Too often the fault lies with the economics of the set up, but often the fault lies with the tutors whose lack of enthusiasm equals their lack of knowledge. I may not have anything startlingly original or informative about animation to give to students, but what I do say, I say with real passion and enthusiasm. I know that this is contagious and gets the students worked up. It's the passion that I have yet to find in a school. Once I'm on the plane back to England, I fear things may go a little flat. I know I'm no Jean Brodie going 'round inspiring everyone I meet, but I think I can get students excited about what they are doing. I can also give students an insight to the realities, pressures and responsibilities of animation production. Unfortunately many colleges seem to be in Cloudcuckooland and in no way prepare the students for the real, practical world of animation. A half-finished degree film is not, as some students are encouraged to believe, an instant passport to a successful career.

However it is all very well for me to breeze into a college and be full of energy, wit and wisdom for a few days, then disappear. To actually train up three model animators in twelve weeks as Cosgrove Hall Films in Manchester asked me to do last autumn, was another thing all together. The three animators that passed the auditions had a little experience, but had got into all manner of lazy habits and ill-advised short cuts. They were very eager to get working with decent and sophisticated puppets, but I had to temper their impatience. For the first four weeks, we went right back to square one and worked only with a cube of wood and a bendy pipe



Just what has Barry Purves been doing for the last two years? Swimming with dolphins in Australia, among other things! Photo courtesy of and © Barry Purves.

cleaner mastering the very essential and basic skills, which is not something I had seen in any of the colleges I'd visited. Without the pressure of a big Degree show, the animators were able to experiment and could afford to get things wrong in order to find out why things do or do not work. At the end of the twelve weeks, I was very pleased with their progress, especially when they were immediately given a year's contract on a prestigious television series. One animator was so thrilled that he immediately went on holiday and broke his wrist snowboarding!



Barry with a student, one of many to which he has taught the craft of stop-motion animation in workshops and seminars around the world. Photo courtesy of and © Barry Purves.

Funding My Own

I have been asked to do another course, which is useful financially, but this is not exactly where I'd seen myself heading. The irony of my situation was brought home to me by going to see a revival of A Chorus Line, when the lead character of Cassie sings, "God, I'm a dancer - a dancer dances! I don't want to teach people to do what I should be doing." The further irony was that her character had been in her business for nineteen years and she had not danced in two years. I could match those statistics exactly. Cassie, not good enough to be a star, but too different to be in the chorus, does not get a part in the show...

This was all a bit painful and spurred me on with even more determination and energy to get funding for any of the dozen or so projects I have written in the last two years. I've hardly been idle in pursuing the funding, but constant rejection is somewhat wearing. All these shouts of how well the British film industry is doing, seem to ring a little hollow when I look back at my and many of my contemporaries' last two years. I have been fortunate enough to team up with a new producer [Chris O'Hare] who has financially supported me through this rather bleak period. He has also pushed my work around to the various studios and television companies and we do have various exciting irons in the fire; but when one will happen, I do not know. Hopefully, we have a short film for Channel Four that may happen this year.

I've hardly been idle in pursuing the funding, but constant rejection is somewhat wearing.

Take A Risk!

Of all the projects that we have been pushing, it is interesting to see the more adventurous ones get rejected straight away. Of course I realize that animation is impossibly expensive, and recouping the budget both risky and slow, but it is terrifying to see the lack of risks being taken in animation features. I raised some fuss last year for daring to criticize [Disney's] The Hunchback of Notre Dame as being a light travesty of Victor Hugo's dark novel. The film was magnificent to look at and listen to, but it had little to do with Hugo. The point I argued then was, 'If the novel is deemed as unsuitable for a family audience, please don't bring in the singing gargoyles and a happy ending. You are being unfair to the original and anybody who will eventually read the book.'

If I'm being honest now, it is not so much the meddling with the original that upsets me. After all, I did watch all the marvelous Steve Reeves Hercules movies, and they, like Disney, played somewhat free with Greek myths. The more worrying idea is that young and family audiences are being patronized and deemed to be unable to cope with anything of any substance or darkness or anything vaguely cultural. In trying to sell my various projects, I have had conversations that I have not believed: Tchaikovsky's music for The Nutcracker has been deemed too difficult for children, Gilbert and

Sullivan too unfamiliar, Hans Andersen too dark and sophisticated and a music drama by Benjamin Britten about Noah, written specifically for ten year-olds, far too adult. I cannot believe that to watch and appreciate an animated feature, it is necessary to undergo some sort of cultural castration. It's odd that in a theater, where the running time is longer than a feature and the whole experience requires more concentration, children will sit with their mouths open watching the basically plotless The Nutcracker,

Barry Purves with Ray Harryhausen at the Masters of Animation conference in Seattle, 1997. Photo courtesy of and © Barry Purves.

totally entranced, their attention held and loving every note of the music. I have seldom seen an empty seat in a theater where The Nutcracker *or any of the Gilbert and Sullivan musicals were playing.*

It really does seem as if producers can think only of entertainment and merchandise (and not always in that order). Is it not possible to make a film that not only entertains, but can also inspire, stimulate, engage and have some substance and innovation? I still think the most perfect family film of recent years was Babe. *With special effects secondary to the wonderful characters and plot, the film did not shy away from the darker issues, and, amazingly, had a wonderful soundtrack that included Bizet and Camille Saint-Saens. I wonder if Saint-Saens was mentioned at the early stage of planning. I have certainly heard many a child singing that tremendously infectious melody.*

It does worry me that animated features are not taking the chances that other art forms clearly are. How I would love to see an animated feature that took a classic and reinvented it with startling innovation and, whilst being true to the original, still manages to bring new meaning and depth to it. This doesn't mean cheapening the original, just bringing fresh eyes to it. Recent examples that have knocked me for six have been Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake *with male swans, Stephen Daldry's production of* An Inspector Calls, *the revamped Broadway* Chicago, *all of Sondheim's works especially* Into the Woods *and the Royal National Theatre's* Peter Pan. *All of these have taken very familiar stories and produced them as if they had never seen them before, and all of them made perfect sense. I'm looking forward to seeing the Broadway [production]* The Lion King, *which seems to have broken new ground. If only there was an animated feature that could dare to be as adventurous with its narration, design, sophistication and substance as these productions. Disney's amazing* Hercules *was quite a radical departure, but I fear the Greeks got a little lost on the way.*

The New Year

So, two years on and I'm still prattling on about quality and standards in animation, but whether I have any room to say anything, I don't know. It is not me, after all, who is getting any films made. There must be a lesson for me to learn there. Maybe, I should just take the first thing offered, shut up and get on with it. Sadly, I would find it difficult to get excited about a project such as was offered to me recently: a company approached full of praise for my previous work and wanted me to do a pop video along the same lines. They did not have an idea of a theme or style, nor a practical budget, but they did want three and a half minutes of detailed animation delivered within as many weeks. Reluctantly, I turned it down, but I'm sure someone has been able to churn something out. Then the, 'Well, if they can do it for so little money and time, why can't you?' begins.

I cannot believe that to watch and appreciate an animated feature it is necessary to undergo some sort of cultural castration.

I have no idea what will happen this year, but I have to move forward. Hopefully, I will get one of my films going. If not, I will have to diversify; already I have come up against the, 'But can you work with or direct people?' syndrome, as if nineteen years of experience counts for nothing. I would love to write a book or present a documentary about animation; anything where I can express my passion for animation and do something as an outlet for all the frustrated creativity that is building up inside me.

It has, without a doubt, been a very difficult couple of years for me, both in terms of my finances and my morale. On top of all this, I suffered a devastating personal tragedy that colored everything. There were times when things were

really touch and go. However, I've still got that British stiff upper lip and I'm optimistic about this year - there are projects slowly bubbling away. It is ironic that just as life really has given me something to talk about in a film, I don't have the means to express myself.

Yes, I know I've grumbled a lot, but there really have been some tremendous moments. I have met some wonderful people from around the world. I still find it hard to believe that my few, short, small films could be responsible for me swimming with dolphins in Australia, being adopted by Carmen Miranda's lovely sister, Aurora, in Rio, dancing with Maori drag queens in New Zealand, and being on the same panel as Henry Selick and Ray Harryhausen at a Masters of Animation weekend in Seattle. It is enormously satisfying to have some of my films on various exam syllabus's around the world, to have students writing their thesis on "Sexuality in the Work of Barry Purves" and to have people familiar with my films wherever I've been.

I just wish I could have the chance to make more films and to stop having to rely on what has gone before.

P.S. Since writing the above article, I have been lucky enough to catch The Lion King on Broadway, and, boy, did my heart leap as high as those gazelles. Surely there has never been a big commercial musical so inventive, so wittily designed, nor so respectful of its' ethnic origins. Most of the theatrical tricks, and there are dozens of them, are not particularly new, having taking inspiration from ancient Japanese theater, Balinese shadow puppets, and even English folk traditions, but they have never been drawn together like this to create something so new. It is a real innovative hymn to the imagination. I shall not forget the sight of two giraffes walking calmly onto the open stage dominated by a blood red sun. Let's hope that four years from now, on arriving in any foreign city, we are not forced to sigh a weary sigh when confronted with yet another scaled down bus and truck tour of The Lion King, or any of the inevitable rip off productions. Let's hope instead that producers will be inspired enough to take equally imaginative risks and break new ground with where The Lion King started - the animated feature.

(....and if anyone happened to be asking, yes, I do happen to have a script that could pick up the gauntlet that I have rather boldly thrown down!)

Barry Purves is a Manchester-based filmmaker. Through his production company, Bare Boards Productions, he has directed several stop-motion animated films and commercials, including Next, Screen Play, Rigoletto *and* Achilles.

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Bonus HTML Features

Every online (HTML) issue of *Animation World Magazine* contains additional features not found in the download or print Acrobat version, such as Quicktime movies, links to Animation World Network sites, extended articles and special sections. Don't miss the following highlights that are showcased exclusively in this month's *Animation World Magazine* HTML version:

http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.11/2.11pages/2.11cover.html

- **Performance Animation: Behind the Character**
  This article contains two Quicktime movies of one of Medialab's "virtual characters" in action.
  http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.11/2.11pages/2.11kenyonmedialab.html
- **Boldly Throwing Down the Gauntlet**
  Barry J.C. Purves' article includes a Quicktime movie clip from his most recent short film, *Achilles.*
  http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.11/2.11pages/2.11purves.html
- **California Summer School for the Arts: More Than an Education**
  This article includes two Quicktime movies of animated films completed by students at CSSSA in 1997.
  http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.11/2.11pages/2.11roslyncsssa.html
- **His Mother's Voice: Dennis Tupicoff's New Documentary**
  This film review includes a Quicktime movie clip of *His Mother's Voice* by Dennis Tupicoff.

A Conversation With.... Chris Walker and Corky Quakenbush

Friday, January 23, 1998
The Rose Cafe, Venice, California

On a sunny, lazy Friday afternoon, Animation World Magazine brought together two animation pioneers who use very different techniques: motion-capture trail blazer, Chris Walker, and outrageous stop-motion satirist, Corky Quakenbush. We met for lunch on the shaded patio of a small, funky cafe, just across the street from Chris' Venice-based Modern Cartoons and near Corky's Santa Monica studio. At first we were rather apprehensive about what they would have in common. After all, stop-motion and motion-capture do not necessarily lend themselves to comparison. Prior to the meeting both had told us they didn't know who the other was, but after less than five minutes at the table we were relieved to find that both were very familiar with and interested in each other's work. Corky had seen Chris' NBC special Steve Oedekerk.com, and Chris had seen Corky's MAD TV shorts, a series of parodies involving some of animations' most wholesome faces.

Corky is currently doing ten more shorts for MAD TV and Chris is working on a number of projects for both the European and U.S. market including a series of interstitials for Fox which will run during the month of February. Both were on tight deadlines but soon seemed very relaxed and talkative. We were happy to find that indeed there are many correlations between the newest and the oldest forms of 3-D animation...

Heather Kenyon: It's funny that you both knew each other's work but didn't know who was behind it.

Corky Quakenbush: That's because animators generally stay in their room all day.

Chris Walker (left) and Corky Quakenbush (right). Photo © AWN.

HK: When you first say motion-capture and stop-motion in the same sentence, they are so different from each other, you think, "What could these men possibly have in common?" Therefore, the first question is about your backgrounds. How has it led up to the animation that you're doing now?

CQ: I started doing stop-motion animation because that was a way for me to create films by myself. I was 13 years old when I discovered what animation was and how it occurred. I'd been a big fan of Davey and Goliath. When I first saw that show, I was six years old. It was the only show on Sunday mornings that was kid-friendly. We were kind of "forced" into watching it, but it just blew me away. Even as a kid I knew it was not "real," but I could sense that it was three-dimensional and existed in space, and that intrigued me. I thought, 'What are these things and how do they move? Are they alive? Are they real?' It kind of freaked me out. Then when I saw Rudolph [Rankin/Bass Christmas special] in 1964, the first time it was on, that was of course the end-all to end-alls. I was really hooked. There's this magical thing that happened, that was a cartoon but it was real. That was real for me. That kind of thrill stayed with me and then as I got older I started doing flip-books on the margins of paper backs...

Chris Walker: Probably on your math books.

CQ: Exactly.

CW: That's where I did mine!

They share a knowing laugh.

CQ: Then I watched this documentary on PBS, and it was some guy explaining that he went into New York City schools and set up stop-motion/paper cut-out [seminars] in animation. He said, 'Yeah, we just have the fish here, and we move the character, and then take two frames then move it again and take two frames....' I had an epiphany. 'That's how they do it!' I thought. Of course nowadays, it's different. I taught an animation course in my daughter's third grade class, and went in and said, 'Okay can anybody tell me what animation is?' Half the class raises their hands. I call on one kid, he says, 'Animation is the drawing or series of drawings in which movement is accomplished by taking...' It's amazing.

We knew that it was going to take too long to create everything in CGI, so we opted to use puppets for our characters and composite them with CGI backgrounds. - Corky Quakenbush

CW: It's interesting to hear your story, Corky. In a parallel fashion, I think that's what drives any animator at the beginning. 'How can you get this done?' There's a certain aspect of that. I probably did similar things, as far as starting out. I really got into drawing, and doing cel, character animation. Then I started seeing what was happening with the computer. Then, one day looking at a stack of drawings that took me two weeks to draw, I knew I had to change some things and do another pencil test. But then I'm looking at a computer over here, which had a rotating cube, very primitive, but the cube was rotating in real time. 'Wow, that's kind of interesting,' I thought. 'This [cels] is going to take me a lot longer, maybe that [the computer] might do what I want to do eventually.' So I just started going into the computer domain. In the early days it was plotter artwork. We would do that one frame at a time, with a pen and ink, very primitive. I just knew deep down that they would be doing character animation or more sophisticated types of animation. Obviously that's been proven many times in the last few years. What's interesting now about your background, and the next project that we're doing, is that we are actually trying to mimic real things now.

"Buzz Light Touch" and "Woody" in Corky Quakenbush's *Sex Toy Story*. Image courtesy of Corky Quakenbush. © QDE.

The waiter swings by with a question...

CW: Anyway getting back into the 3-D thing. Most people get into the computer so that they can basically make this teapot [for example]. That's what they want to do, that's their aim in life, which I find odd because I come from animation. We're actually trying to do something now that's similar to Thomas the Tank Engine but it's with airplanes. The airplanes look like real models, real toys, but their faces animate. It's motion-capture on the face, being done in real time. We're actually imposing them into miniature backgrounds, real table top miniatures.

CQ: That's very interesting to me too because I'm also interested in the marriage of the two technologies.

CW: You should come over, take a look.

CQ: Yeah, I'd like to.

CW: Let's go.

They act like they are going right there and then, getting up from the table! Fortunately for this article, they sit back down again, laughing.

CW: We don't have it in the miniature yet but we've got a plane up and running.

I've been sort of running on faith that the technology will get cheaper. - Chris Walker

CQ: There are certain aspects to both sides that are very appealing. We did one marriage of the two worlds in Sex Toy Story. It was a parody of Toy Story. We knew that it was going to take too long to create everything in CGI, so we opted to use puppets for our characters and composite them with CGI backgrounds. We kept the kind of feeling that Toy Story had, so that people would look at it and feel they were looking at a CGI thing. It was all sex toys: "Woody" aka "Midnight Cowboy," with a little vest and chaps and bare butt, and a vibrator, "Buzz Light Touch." It was fun because we had to light everything in front of a green screen, imagining, "Where am I going to have my light sources?" In a CGI background, you're just going to stick a light out the window somewhere and everything falls into place. We had to duplicate that in the real world with these characters in front. Reflections

in Buzz's helmet and things like that made it really interesting and quick! We had basically three weeks to create characters and animate them.

CW: Wow, that's fast.

CQ: In that sense, stop-motion can rule. But that's only one [short]. Something like you're doing, if Oedekerk decided to do a series...

CW: Yes, it's a problem for everybody. Either you have to send it overseas or... I've often thought it was strange for me to approach Saturday morning, with the most expensive amount of technology and time. It didn't make sense because it's the smallest amount of budget you can get in TV. I've been sort of running on faith that the technology will get cheaper. Computer graphics has a very strong elitism of, 'The guy with the biggest toys wins' sort of thing, at least historically. Now, it's getting a lot better. Get a PC, a copy of Lightwave and do your thing. That's really great because it's much more egalitarian. Still, to crash the Saturday episodic [market] is extremely difficult. We're [Modern Cartoons] really putting all our energy into that right now, to figure out how to make it cost effective and still do great work.

I'm starting not to call what we do "animation," because I think it might be misleading. - Chris Walker

CQ: I think it's getting easier, as the prices come down and the technology expands.

CW: The thing is, I'm starting not to call what we do "animation," because I think it might be misleading. It has a visual quality of animation, a lot of exaggeration and things that you would associate with it, but we're starting to shoot these things like a sitcom. Everyone gets in a room. They put on these suits, and the actors are actually the characters. They're in a virtual environment, and you're cutting camera live. At the end of the day, you have a whole show on tape. You edit it, and put in special effects afterwards. It works for an episodic where you're writing it on Sunday and the show's on the air the following Saturday. That's the paradigm for how we're approaching programming, except that it does kind of have an animated quality. I don't even know what to call it anymore, because we're approaching it from the standpoint of live-action, but it's visually an animated episode. Now, it's a lot harder to do the sight gags, like hit someone over the head and flatten them. That's the bleeding edge that we're trying to accomplish. It's another whole industry, really.

Comedian Steve Oedekerk's computer counterpart, created by Chris Walker and his company, Modern Cartoons. Image courtesy of Modern Cartoons. © O Entertainment.

CQ: It seems like a natural progression of things, to go toward that.

HK: This leads into our next question: How do each of you personally define animation?

CW: What did that third grader say?

We all laugh.

CQ: Any kind of thing that we're doing, on film or on tape, the human eye is seeing projected images one after another. Even live-action is, if you look at it from a certain standpoint, animation. You've got a series of still frames that when put together include motion [persistence of vision].

CW: I think it depends on who you talk to. It's somewhat subjective. I know that certain people in the industry would say King of the Hill is not animation. They think that the classic form of squash and stretch, Disney style, is "really" animation, and everything else is some other beast. I don't even know what they would call it. I don't make those judgments. Obviously, I'm in this weird cutting edge area. We have yet to define what were doing, to give it a name. I tend to think that it has more to do with visual quality than how it's animated. What do you think, Corky?

CQ: I'd have to agree with you there. I think it's creating a fantastic world that doesn't exist in reality, at

least not in this form. I think that's what people get out of it...

CW: The test would be... Did you see Titanic? The shot where they fly around the ship; the shot where they did motion-capture on the Captain. Those guys went for realism but had a very illustrative quality which I loved. It was really interesting to see something that was obviously not live-action. I think most people would see that shot and think, 'Wow, what is that? It's totally different, but I like it.' I would still call that animation, even though they were going for the ultimate in hyper-realism. That's really the edge of what animation would be defined as.

CQ: I think it's the same thing with Toy Story, where you're trying to mimic reality, but in the same sense, the world you're creating does not exist in reality.

CW: Whether the history of animation has done this, or whether it's some psychological process that humans have, I think that when people look at something in motion like that, they think, 'Okay, you got me. You got my brain, my fantasy. I'll go anywhere you want to go.' You won't do that with live-action. There's a psychological threshold that you hit, with The Simpsons or King of the Hill, which by other standards may be conservative to the animator, but still you'll go anywhere with those characters. You'll buy just about anything they say. I think that's the mental leap. If there was an abstract definition of animation, that is what would have to happen [to the viewer].

HK: With some of the amazing special-effects shots though, you're really making a leap into that fantasy world that could never happen.

CW: The Fifth Element was visually unbelievable, but I still think of it as a live-action film. It wasn't like watching an animated film where I felt the limitlessness of the human imagination at work, where you really feel like, 'I'm stepping into a magical world.'

"Gumboy" and "Poker" in a *MAD TV* short by Corky Quakenbush. Image courtesy of Corky Quakenbush. © QDE

HK: Both of you are really on the cutting edge: Chris, with your technique, and Corky with your content. How do each one of you feel that what you're doing fits into the animation industry as a whole?

My inspiration is about being between live-action and animation. - Chris Walker

CW: Well, I'm happy to be undefined. My inspiration is about being between live-action and animation. Here's another art form entirely. All these shows come down to the talent you attract to it, the writing, the characters, all that. I tend to think that I'm doing my job if every show that comes out is completely undefined; no one really knows what it is or figures out how it was done. That's what's interesting to me, that it's cutting new ground. I've always felt that computer graphics as a whole has been able to offer storytelling new vistas. We're now witnessing the explosion of special effects films. Whether the stories are any better, that's another story, but they are able to do things that haven't been done before. I don't think Godzilla would have been done five years ago. Did I dance around that question, or what?

HK: I didn't even notice! How about you Corky?

CQ: I'm happy to say that I think there is a burgeoning industry in short-form animation. There used to be a lot of it, all theatrical shorts, but then the theaters stopped. Now with television, and hopefully with the Internet, these short forms of expression are going to find a greater audience. Also the shorter attention spans of people allow these things to find a home. It works on MAD TV because it's a sketch show. A few years back, Bill Plympton was doing short animation for a show called The Edge. Then there's Saturday Night Live with J.J. Sedelmaier's stuff. I've heard about sketch animation shows in the works here and there. I think this is all great. I think people are really open to it. It's visually stimulating.

I like what I do. It's just so fun. We have these miniature worlds that we build, and we are duplicating a certain reality. If I dare say it, they're 'cute!' For example, we had a great little kitchen set. We're doing a third segment of Clops, and they're going to find the Pillsbury Dough Boy gone nuts at a commercial shoot. So we've got this great little kitchen built, as big as a table top. It's almost like a hyper-reality. The next part that's fun is to shoot it like it's a real movie. Live-action for me is much more intriguing to do than animation. People who do cel animation...it's incon-

ceivable to me how they can sit and draw the same thing over and over, making minute changes. People say to me, "Isn't what you do really tedious?" I can only think it can't be as tedious as drawing frame after frame. I'm looking forward to all the new technologies. What we do is primitive.

HK: Do you think that people perceive your techniques as being "adult?" Is it innate in the technique?

CW: I don't make the distinction.

CQ: I think what's going to make a difference in your audience is content. If kids watch this Steve Oedekerk special or the jet plane show, they're going to be more interested in what the plane has to say than how it's done. I think it's the same thing with adults, maybe even especially with adults. I think the technique can work for you. What I do is more adult-oriented animation, and because of that there's more appreciation of those little details that I was talking about. For instance, when we did a parody of Gumby, in which "Gumboy" and "Poker" go into their dad's den, find a "Clayboy" magazine under the couch, circa 1967...'Wow, look at the plasticine on her!' They jump in and all of a sudden they are in the Sixties, in the Clayboy mansion. We made a little lava lamp. I think those little details would be lost on kids. Adults appreciate it.

CW: Do you think there's something to be said for the fact that all of us grownups, who were weaned on cartoons, basically never grew up?

CQ: Yeah, I think so. Comic books too. The seriousness that comic books took on. It's a real vindication for Mom. Mom was saying, "Your eyes are going to fall out from reading all of those comic books." Now our culture is immersed in them.

HK: Animation is being touted as the art form for the 21st century. Do you see that? Do you believe that? Do you think right now, in your careers, that there is a growing need for your content and do you think there will be in the future?
CQ: You would always hope so. As an art from, it's really the only kind of filmmaking that's affordable. You know, I was just at Sundance, and there was always this discussion about art versus commerce. I just made a live-action short, ten minutes long, and it cost $35,000. That's paying minimum wages, getting a lot for free. It's expensive. That means there are going to have to be investors somewhere, and that means that business and art are going to have to merge somewhere. If you go into animation, well, I could take an 8mm camera, make a film, transfer it to video, and really do the same ten minute film for maybe $1,000. So that makes animation an appealing art form for people who want to get into motion pictures.

People who do cel animation...it's inconceivable to me how they can sit and draw the same thing over and over, making minute changes.
-Corky Quakenbush

What's been the biggest drawback of any kind of art form in the media is that there's been a very narrow distribution outlet. Thirty years ago there were only three networks. If you wanted to have something on TV, it had to go through those three networks. As cable opened up many different markets, we started seeing an expansion of a lot of different kinds of programming, niche programming. For me the greatest thrill is thinking about what the Internet is going to do. The Internet may well provide us with a direct route to the consumer. MAD TV has 5 million viewers and that's really a minimum. In order to be on a network, I have to have 5 million people who think my stuff is great. But maybe I want to do something that's so outrageous that only 100,000 people will like it. This way [the Internet], I can get to those people and suddenly 100,000 people becomes a much bigger number than it is to these people at the studio. Once our consumers can get right to us, to type in their credit card number and pay a buck to see a movie...

CW: Cut out the middle-man.

CQ: Exactly. I think the thing [the Internet] is revolutionizing itself. I would be lying if I said it wasn't exciting. John K is a pioneer. He will get his audience. People that go for Disney aren't necessarily going to go for Spumco. I've got three hours of material that I made by myself that I own. I would love to have it up on the "Space Bass" web site, and then people can come to it.

CW: You think it's going to work? Like Pay Per View?

CQ: Yeah, if it's 50 cents or a dollar, I think the marketing will follow suit. People say, 'How are we going to make money with the web?' So then they put advertising on. It'll be the same.

CW: John K will probably make his money on merchandising.

Wendy Jackson: He already is.

CW: So it's the same model as TV.

HK: That's the great thing about the Internet. Everyone gets their own channel.

WJ: Who's going to make the TV guide?

CQ: Well the word of mouth on the net is so strong.

Chris Walker "all suited up" while filming *Crash Bandicoot Live.* Image courtesy of Modern Cartoons.The character Crash Bandicoot is © Sony Computer Entertainment.

CW: I don't want to be the pessimist, but back in the early '80s, when I was in art school, everyone was talking about this new thing called MTV. Everyone said, "All the animators are going to have a place to put their stuff!" Well that didn't quite work out. We've been struggling for years to get any kind of quality into computer animation.

CQ: Well the first telephone sucked. There was one line from here to another room.

HK: The first words actually spoken were something like, "Can you speak up? I can't hear you."

WJ: It wasn't "this sucks?"

We all share a good laugh at that one.

CQ: Wait. Wasn't it, "Watson, come here, I need you"?

CW: I think someone rewrote that.

HK: What about you Chris. Do you feel that people in the beginning were like, 'Motion-capture, performance animation...what's this?' Do you think it will become more accepted and more widespread in the future?

I think as an art form, everything that's media-oriented is opening up to the individual as an artist. - Corky Quakenbush

CW: Yes, I do. I think it will take over the whole industry actually. Intrinsically, the computer can do anything that you can describe, that you can tell it to do. The problem is telling it. We've been in this long process of describing to the computer all of these complex things. As we keep evolving, it will look like cel animation. It will look like clay, though it probably won't animate like clay. Visually speaking, it will start taking on different mediums. It's not really limited in the spectrum of all that. I don't know about animation being the art form of the future. I have to think twice about that. It would be wishful thinking I suppose. At the level that you're on, you are actually creating an art form. The level that I'm on is that I'm getting involved in commerce, and trying to solve that problem. Obviously you want to inject as much quality and "art" into the process, but at the same time we've got to figure out how to get the animation done here in the U.S., not let people burn out in the process, and still come up with a great product. That's been very difficult, particularly because computers have been expensive. But when you talk about art form, I think more about fine art. I don't know how much what I do will fall into that. As far as computer animation and its potential, I think that where it can go, as far as doing really an art experience, may be closer to a Fantasia or an image evolutionary experience in terms of light and motion. What the computer can offer is all that with a complete immersion. You can actually walk into a stereo environment because the computer is actually building a facsimile of our world. I think from the standpoint of pure art, that's where it can go. It's up to the artist to make something of it.

CQ: When you look at something like Myst or Riven, the visuals in there are very beautiful. They don't have to go out and create that world. The whole movie business has always from day one asked, 'How can we make something better than it is in reality?'

CW: And to amplify it.

CQ: For me, I'm really intrigued in the low-tech things, like glass paintings. Things that somebody sat down and thought, looking through the viewfinder of the camera at a two dimensional world, 'I'm going to make a painting out of this world. We have these streets and these buildings...but behind it, let's put in Baghdad.' It's a special effect and it's done in a really low-tech way, by just putting in a piece of glass and painting it. That's artistry. I think as an art form, everything that's media-oriented is opening up to the individual as an artist. People have sound design studios in their home, music studios in their garages and they're putting out good stuff. It isn't like someone twenty years ago with a cassette recorder, guitar and microphone. It's a whole different world out there.

We say, 'You can't own this, this is an actor.' They say, 'Oh really? Can I talk to their agent?' - Chris Walker

CW: It is interesting that you put the two of us together. There really is a big similarity in what we're doing and the industry is starting to coalesce towards that. I know the Henson people are really excited about what motion capture can do, because they are performers. I never envisioned that. I thought I was going to be doing Saturday morning cel animation.

CQ: I think it's going to be great when the computer world can create real motion that people don't feel has that computer edge. You can almost see the mathematical curve.

WJ: I don't feel that when I'm watching motion capture versus straight computer animation. You can see the subtleties of motion.

CW: This is how I differentiate motion capture from other forms of animation. You can talk to the character. The character will respond and have a soul you're just not used to seeing in an animated character. There's something about that where there's a depth, the response the character has. It's not really puppeteering. It's a real person. So you've got this weird mixture of fantasy and reality. I think it's safe to say that most hand animation has been worked to death, scripted and storyboarded. Not to say those aren't good tools for planning a show, but you get the sense that it went through a factory. Whereas this [motion capture] has a depth of personality, a spontaneity.

WJ: It seems like you have that too Corky. Not in the same way but you shoot pretty quickly.

CQ: Yes, there's a scene in Raging Rudolph where Yukon Cornelius winds an elf's head in a vice. That came out two weeks after Casino opened.

CW: The funny thing is that Steve Oedekerk wanted me to do that with him. I said, "Steve, I've got a lot of work to do, are you sure you want me to do that?" He wanted his eyes bulging and popping out. I guess that scene has gotten around! We're doing something for Fox right now, and a lot of projects in Europe, in a way, we are creating characters that are like actors.

WJ: Now, see if you can get an agent to represent one of your cyber characters.
CW: That's what's going on, seriously. Everyone has this thing about owning a character, owning everything, everywhere down the line. We say, 'You can't own this, this is an actor.' They say, 'Oh really? Can I talk to their agent?' and the paradigm shifts. I don't know how much I want to follow that paradigm but at least it keeps people from buying everything out from under you. The thing about the industry is that it's completely merchandise driven. People are not paying what it actually costs to put a show together. This is what's happening on Saturday morning. They're all banking on the fact that they'll make a lot of money in merchandising. That's why we have such a huge animation industry. In Europe, they don't know anything about it, and consequently, they don't have money to do shows. You're damned both ways, essentially.

CQ: I have a character named Ricardo. He's controversial. A lot of times when you're pitching for TV, you get one shot. If someone says, 'No, it's not for me,' you never get another shot. However, you can essentially re-do the character a bit, introduce him with another face, and give it another shot. The real true character is behind the face.

Chris (left) and Corky (right) enjoy a meal and conversation. Photo © AWN.

At Last, Foam Puppet Fabrication Explained!

by Tom Brierton

This metal armature, left, became the final praying mantis puppet on the right when encased in a cast foam latex exterior. All elements were constructed by Tom Brierton. Photo courtesy of and © Tom Brierton.

Stop-motion puppet animation is surely one of the most unusual art forms in the world. In cel animation, one must master drawing and performance. In computer animation, one needs to acquaint themselves with the technicalities of the mouse and keyboard, as well as performance. While these two animation disciplines require talent and drive to achieve successful animation, stop-motion is unique in the animation field in that it encompasses a number of disciplines to achieve a final end. Design, armature machining, sculpting, moldmaking and casting, painting and detailing, lighting and cinematography, and of course, performance animation, are the primary skills required to master this wonderfully magical art form. While it certainly isn't necessary for a single individual to master all of these disciplines (and there are few stop-motion animators who have), there is no reason why one cannot attempt to do so, and have fun in the process.

I have designed this article as a cursory description of the stop-motion process. It will deal with the necessary disciplines for creating a stop-motion puppet. The disciplines include: design of the puppet, armature machining, sculpting, moldmaking and casting, fabrication and detailing. I will be leaving out discussions on character animation as that process is an article in itself. I have also written in a cursory fashion, because, quite frankly, a single book could be written on every step of the stop-motion process. It is beyond the scope of this article to attempt to write a volume on each discipline. For the uninitiated, they can perhaps walk away with a better understanding of stop-motion, and use the following information as a point of departure for their own animation endeavors. As stop-motion legend Ray Harryhausen once told me years ago, "self-experimentation will be your greatest teacher." I would like to pass on his wise counsel, with the assumption that those who read this article will like-wise, take this information and experiment for themselves.

Design With Attitude

Many puppet animators start with an idea for a creature to animate. The puppet can be inspired from an animal, art, mythology, a book, music, or one's own imagination. Regardless of the source, the ultimate objective is to translate the idea of your creation to the actual tools necessary for creating the puppet. I am very fond of the minotaur, a monster from classical Greek mythology, but up until recently, I had never created one as a stop-motion puppet. Determined to do so, I proceeded to research the problem. Research is usually the first step, particularly if one is creating a creature that actually exists in real life, such as animals or insects. Since the minotaur is a hybrid animal incorporating the body of a man and the head of a bull, I searched for photographs of human males and of bulls. Since the minotaur was supposed to have been a dangerous animal, bloodthirsty and violent, the idea was to design the character so that it is indeed imbued with these attributes. To design the minotaur with skinny legs, a pot belly and short stubby horns would hardly qualify it as a frightening monster. Consequently, the solution decided upon was to design it with

a hulking body: huge arms, rippling with muscles and veins, sinister deep-set beady eyes and long, sharp horns. In short, try to design the character you want, by incorporating into its design physical attributes that would heighten and augment what you wish for the creature to convey. If animated properly, its performance will even magnify its appearance. This principle of creature design plus character animation is, in some ways, rather similar to the film music principle, which states that if, for example, two lovers are kissing, then coupling that image with romantic music will heighten the affectation (emotion) of the scene. Conversely, the image of a valiant, but slain warrior, combined with 'sad' music, will impart a feeling of sorrow. Design your character around the 'affectation' of how you want the viewer to react to it. Since I wanted the viewer to react to my minotaur with fear, I designed it accordingly.

Finally, once I felt that sufficient research had been done, and enough photos and reference material had been collected, I proceeded to draw up dozens of design concepts in pencil, pen and ink, and color renderings. The next step is designing the mechanics of the armature.

Stop-motion is unique in the animation field in that it encompasses a number of disciplines to achieve a final end.

Armatures: The Insides

Back in the early '70s, when I first started learning how to machine armatures, I went out to the local hardware shop and bought miscellaneous stuff like door linkers, washers, L-brackets, plastic balls with rods on them and such that I could throw together to try and simulate a stop-motion armature. While this was all good training and experience, the armatures I ended up with were strictly amateurish at best and could never have been used for anything other than decorative pieces in my room.

Over the years, I've learned the techniques and tools of the trade for designing and machining a technically successful stop-motion armature. My philosophy in machining a competent armature is that there really are no shortcuts, I'm afraid. Any compromise in the machining of the armature would cause one to end up with parts that would, at best, be substandard and hence, unusable for stop-motion animation. I could advise to go ahead and throw something together with found parts from a local hardware store, but this would really be more of a regression in one's professionalism, rather than a progression. I could tell you that you can slap together an armature from found parts and it would work really great, but from personal experience, and after almost 24 years of experimenting with different things, I've pretty much discovered what will and won't work in armature construction. Armature machining is a wonderful art form in its own right, even apart from stop-motion animation. Often-times, when people come by my studio and see my armatures, they are quite aghast when I tell them that the armatures will eventually be covered with foam. Many people prefer that they be placed on display just as they are!

Once the design of the puppet is finalized, I make a detailed line drawing of the creature, in front, side, and top elevated views, in the actual size that the puppet will be. After that, I lay a piece of tracing paper over the drawing(s) and I sketch out the mechanics of the armature directly onto the tracing paper. This way, I will know what the exact size will be for the armature part(s) once I prepare to machine it. Since armature parts can't be found anywhere, but have to be custom-made for any particular puppet, I then take each armature piece that makes up the armature itself (from the littlest finger all the way down to the toes) and do a detailed mechanical drawing, on graph paper, of each armature

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piece. Then I take these detailed drawings to the lathe and mill and machine them out. Depending on the complexity of the armature, and how many pieces there are, an armature can take anywhere from one to eight weeks to machine. I just finished off an armature for a velociraptor which took me about four and a half weeks to machine, plus an additional week to figure out the mechanics of the armature and draw out each piece individually on graph paper.

I don't know how much money you're willing to spend, but a person can get the necessary tools to begin machining successful armatures for about US $700. Obtain a catalogue from a company in San Marcos, California, USA called Sherline Products, Inc. Sherline manufactures miniature lathes and mill column attachments. Their phone number is 1-800-541-0735. Their lathes and mills are top-notch, roughly the size of a large sewing machine.

Putting It Together

Before putting an armature together, you need to become familiar with the various types of joints. There are basically six:

- *Hinge joint*
- *Swivel joint*
- *Dowel joint*
- *Universal joint*
- *Ball and socket*
- *Collet joint*

I use hinge and swivel joints primarily. Hinges are very useful for knee, elbow and spine joints. Swivels are great for pronating and supinating at the elbow and for joints just below the hips and knees. Swivels are generally connected to a hinge joint and work off of the hinges.

Probably one of the most frustrating and difficult aspects of building an armature is the rod-to-bearing solder attachment for ball sockets. A very good solution was described to me by stop-motion animator Paul Jessel, which I will pass on:

After the bearings have been drilled out on a lathe, they are placed on a heat-resistant surface. The materials you will need are:

- *A small butane torch (get at a Radio Shack, electronics-type store)*
- *Extra propane tanks*
- *Silver solder (The best can be bought at: L.B. Allen Co., 725 N. Central, Wooddale, IL 60191 USA The telephone number is: 1-708-595-2600)*
- *A helping hand (also at a Radio Shack, electronics-type store)*
- *Solder flux*
- *X-acto blades*

Ray Harryhausen once told me years ago, "self-experimentation will be your greatest teacher."

Place the bearing onto your surface. Shave off pin-head sized solder with the x-acto blade. Be careful not to cut yourself! Lubricate these solder pieces with flux and drop them into the bearing until you have enough that brings them close to the top, but not completely. Take your rod which will be the same diameter as the bearing hole,

Many small joints and limbs are created for one four-legged animal puppet. Photo courtesy of and © Tom Brierton

or you can turn it minus a thousandths of an inch to help it slip better into the bearing, and lubricate the tip with flux. Let it set for a minute, then put the rod into one of the clamps of the helping hand and tilt the helping hand arm so that the rod is balanced onto the top of the bearing hole above the solder. The helping hand should be balancing on the back of its' base. Now, turn on the torch and heat the ball. The solder inside the ball will go soft after a few seconds depending on the size of the bearing. Naturally, small bearings will heat faster; larger bearings will heat slower. Once this happens, the weight of the helping hand will force the rod down into the bearing. If it doesn't, I very gingerly tap the top of the rod with a small hammer. Let the rod-to-bearing assembly set for a few seconds, then cool it under some tap water, and clean it off with a mild soap. Sometimes, when the rod goes down into the ball, if you've placed too much solder inside the bearing, extra solder will flow up and out of the hole and onto the rod and/or bearing surface. If this happens, wait for the assembly to cool, then take your x-acto blade and scrape off the residual solder. Prior to soldering, I like to take the rod and, using the lathe, cut a tiny groove at the tip of the

rod at the end that will go into the bearing. This way, when the rod goes into the ball, the solder sets around the groove and helps the rod to sit better and more firmly inside the ball.

Patience *Is* a Virtue

If a joint is machined without any real thought or care going into it, you're likely to get a joint that pops or ratchets when you try to move it. This can be absolutely maddening when you're animating a puppet and all of a sudden the armature pops or breaks. Unless you're using a frame grabber, you've really created a problem for yourself because now you will need to repair the puppet and start the shot over again. Machining tolerances of armature parts need to be in +/- thousandths of an inch and some armature machinists machine in 10,000ths of an inch! The thing of it is: the process of actually machining an armature really isn't all that difficult in terms of tool usage. In other words, you don't have to have a degree in industrial design or math to use a mill or lathe. The only thing that I find difficult about armature machining is the need for patience. If I hurry, I will invariably overturn a part or overdrill a hole. Slow and easy, in my opinion, is the key to successfully turning out parts for a decent armature.

This armature has more than 20 individual joints. Photo courtesy of and © Tom Brierton.

Obviously, once again, you're going to need supplies for the next step and here is a list:

- *Number 2024T-356 aircraft aluminum (most machinists use this grade of aluminum)*
- *Hex head screws*
- *Taps*
- *Reamers*
- *Phosphor bronze washers (used in hinge joints)*
- *Drills and various jobbers*
- *Number 302 Grade 100 stainless steel ball bearings (some machinists use 440 bearings)*
- *Shoulder screws (sometimes called shoulder bolts)*
- *Dowel pins*
- *Slotting saws*
- *End mills*
- *Ball end mills*
- *Milling cutters*

Slotting saws, milling cutters and end mills, both straight and ball, are actually used to sculpt the piece of aluminum into the shape that you want. Slotting saws and milling cutters are held in a saw arbor, which in turn is held in a mill collet, which turns on the mill. The shank diameter of an arbor used on a Sherline 4000 mill is generally a half-inch, so buy a mill collet that will hold a shank that's at least that diameter. (Don't worry. Sherline has everything that you'll need.) End mills are the most frequently used cutter for metal sculpting. They are held in an end mill collet. Collets, whether it's an end mill or saw/cutter collet, actually hold the cutting tool secure in place while one performs the machining operation.

As I said, the first thing you should do is order the Sherline catalogue. It's cheap and will give you an idea of the tools that are necessary for you to have in order to build a decent armature. Also, order a catalogue from J & L Industrial Supply. They're a U.S. distributor of various machining knick-knacks. Their catalogue is free, and huge, so call 1-800-521-9520. McMaster-Carr is another one-stop shopping place for any and all supplies, except bronze washers. For a catalogue call 1-630-833-0300. For phosphor bronze washers, call Seastrom Manufacturing at 1-800-634-2356. Phosphor bronze washers are used in hinge joints. Measuring tools which you may also need include micrometers, surface gauges, a dial indicator and a dial caliper.

Next Stop: Sculpting

You can go to just about any bookstore and find books on sculpting. For stop-motion models, most people in the industry use a brand of clay called Roma, which comes in various grades ranging from extra-soft to hard. I use Roma #3, which sculpts nicely and is less prone to cracking over time. To get really smooth textures, I use a paintbrush and brush a little rubbing alcohol, or better, rubber cement thinner, onto the surface and blend the clay with either a tool of some kind, or my finger. I can't really tell you much about sculpting because, as are most things in this world, it's really learned from practice.

Slow and easy, in my opinion, is the key to successfully turning out parts for a decent armature.

Rather than sculpt the clay directly onto the armature as some animators do, I prefer to make a heavy aluminum wire armature (16 gauge is good) into the exact shape and scale as the actual machined armature. This way I don't have to clean the clay off of the metal armature which can take quite a long while to do. Plus, Roma has some-

what of a nasty corrosive habit of, over time, eating away at the aluminum surface. Another way is to wrap the armature with clear, plastic, food wrap. This keeps the armature clean and clay-free for when you're ready to take the sculpture out of the mold and strip the clay off of the armature.

Mold Making: Two Methods, One Puppet

There's basically two main ways to finish a puppet in foam: the foam-injection method, which uses the clay sculpture, and the build-up method, which doesn't. Most puppets I know of are actually a combination of the two. For example, they have a foam injected body, then surface detail like muscles and hair are built up, literally sculpted, over the armature using the build-up technique. For the skeletons in *Jason And The Argonauts,* Ray Harryhausen had his father machine the armatures, then Ray actually sculpted the models using the build-up technique. He applied rubber, mixed with cotton, directly onto the armature and after it dried, he added a coat or two of rubber to smooth out the sculpture. Jim Danforth also used the build-up technique for the mother dinosaur in *When Dinosaurs Ruled The Earth.*

The next day, *very* gingerly pry the mold apart, and if all has gone well, you will have a foam rubber representation of your original clay sculpture surrounding the armature.

A mold needs to be made of the clay sculpture before you can inject foam rubber into it for oven curing. The mainstay of mold-making material for a stop-motion puppet is a product called Ultracal-30. Ultracal is a little like plaster, but denser, and, unlike plaster, it reproduces sculpted textures extremely well. It is also less likely to shatter like plaster if accidentally dropped on the floor. Utracal is almost like concrete, but isn't nearly as heavy.

Mold making isn't very easy. It takes a lot of practice. Most molds are anywhere from two to four or five pieces, depending on the anatomy of the puppet. For example, if you're making a human shaped puppet, a two-piece generally will do the trick, one for the front and one for the back of the sculpture. However, if your human shaped critter has a long tail, then a two-piece mold will need to be made of that as well. If it also has wings, then another two-piece mold will need to be generated. So, you end up with six pieces for your sculpture of a human shape with a tail and wings. In my opinion, creating the six molds separately is the only practical way to do this. Then, after all the foam rubber for each respective mold has been properly cured in the oven, they are carefully pried out and attached to the armature (wings to the back, tail to the rump). Then, exposed seams can be covered using the build-up technique with additional rubber that cures at room-temperature. I get my Ultracal-30 from a supplier in the Chicago area called Art Studio Clay Co. They can be reached at 1-800-323-0212. However, you might also be able to find some at your local art supply store.

Though there are a number of ways to apply the mixed Ultracal-30 to your clay sculpture, I generally do the following procedure for pouring the mold. To pour one-half of the mold first, I lay the puppet down, anchored to a piece of wood with screws in its feet to support it, and place the reclined sculpture into a square wooden box. Mix up the Ultracal and pour it into this wooden box, just covering one-half of the sculpture (in this case, the lower half, letting the Ultracal rise up to meet it.) Let this half of the mold dry first overnight, until it's hard and dry to the touch. The next day, rub mold releasing agent on the mold surface and then pour the rest of the Ultracal to complete the two piece mold. Believe me, this is much more difficult and time-consuming than it sounds, so be prepared to make some mistakes, and practice a lot.

This minotaur puppet armature was covered with plastic wrap before the clay figure was sculpted on top. Later it will be cast in a mold. Photo courtesy of and © Tom Brierton

All of your sculpting supplies can be purchased from Burman Industries in Van Nuys, California. Their phone number for a free catalogue is 1-818-782-9833. You can also buy instruction tapes on mold-making, sculpting and painting from them.

The build-up technique calls for simply sculpting foam rubber mixed with cotton, directly onto the armature into the shape of the crea-

ture's musculature. Then, thin sheets of dried foam rubber (detailed with scales, hair, etc.) can be wrapped around the muscles. I'm currently sculpting my minotaur in this fashion. It isn't as easy to do as foam-injection, but with practice the results can be quite wonderful. Marcel Delgado sculpted the Joe models in *Mighty Joe Young* in this manner as well.

Almost Done: Foam Casting

Foam casting, in my opinion, is the hardest step in the foam-injection process. Because foam is extremely difficult to mix and set properly, it takes a great deal of patience and experience. Be prepared to spend a lot of money making mistakes. You'll get it eventually, though.

R&D Foam Latex used to be the most popular and frequently used product, however it is no longer available. Kryolan is another brand which I've used with good results. There's a supplier in England and Burman also has their own brand. Whichever company you decide to go with, they will send you detailed instructions on how to mix it.

This technique is called foam-injection because strategically placed holes are drilled into the molds. The armature is wrapped with a flexible material (I use Saran Wrap, a clear, plastic food wrap) and carefully lined up inside the mold. This is done because foam latex rubber has a kind of ammonia base, which smells bad and causes corrosion on metal. Always wear a face mask when working with foam. The mold is clamped shut and sealed tight with belt clamps which can be purchased from Burman's. Then the mixed up foam is poured into a special foam injection gun which can also be found at Burman's. The foam is then injected into the mold. This has to be done quickly, because the gelling agent that is added to the foam can sometimes cause the foam to set up inside the gun, thus making it impossible to inject through the nozzle. In which case, you'll have to re-mix and pour more foam. Foam doesn't have a very long shelf life; four to six months tops if stored in ideal conditions. It needs to be used as soon as you get it. I wouldn't buy the foam until your molds are already done. Once the foam is properly injected, the mold is placed in an oven (or kiln) and allowed to cure for a few hours. After sufficient curing time, the mold is taken out and allowed to cool at room temperature, usually overnight. The next day, *very* gingerly pry the mold apart, and if all has gone well, you will have a foam rubber representation of your original clay sculpture surrounding the armature. *Voila!* All that's left now is detailing (hair, fingernails, eyes, etc.) and painting.

This armature is for a genie character. Photo courtesy of and © Tom Brierton.

You might be asking yourself, "Why go through all this trouble making a foam puppet, when I can just sculpt the puppet in clay and animate it that way?" Foam latex offers a tremendous plus in that, when it's properly cast and painted, it uncannily resembles flesh and muscle, an extremely difficult effect to achieve in clay. However, probably the single largest advantage of a foam latex puppet is in what I call "the mush factor." The armature has to be fairly tight to hold positions during animation. When you're animating a puppet made from clay, once you push an appendage, like an arm or leg, to its next position, you will invariably disturb the clay as well. Since clay doesn't spring back into the shape it originally was, the surface of your sculpture will pixelate when you project the animation back in dailies. Foam, on the other hand, when you grab and then release the puppet, will repeatedly spring back into its exact shape. This is crucial in a time-lapse process like film animation. You could try to re-sculpt a clay puppet if you've inadvertently disturbed the surface, but this takes time, and chances are you'll never get the sculpture precisely the shape it previously was. Foam alleviates the problem.

I hope all this helps. Let me know how your experiments go and if you need any help!

Tom Brierton is currently based in Chicago, Illinois and works freelance as a stop-motion animator, armature machinist and CGI animator for various animation houses and a video gaming company. His interests in stop-motion animation began in 1972, when he was fifteen.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Little Big Estonia: The Nukufilm Studio

by Heikki Jokinen

Estonia is a little big nation of animation. For a country of some two million inhabitants, it has a long record of international animation festival awards and many, well-known and revered animators. The Tallinnfilm studio was established 40 years ago in the Estonian capital of Tallinn, which was at that time part of the Soviet Union. Estonia is one of the three Baltic republics that regained it's independence after the fall of the Soviet Union. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Tallinnfilm has divided into two separate studios, one specializing in stop-motion puppet film and one that completes traditional, cel animation.

Estonia's History

For many years, early Estonian animation was stop-motion puppet animation, a genre still strong both in Estonia and many other former socialist European countries. For the very first puppet films, the puppets were made in the Tallinn Puppet Theater under the supervision of filmmakers. This theater still exists and regularly puts on programs on their stage.

The sudden jump from a centralized state production system to a completely capitalist system was fatal for artistic animation in many parts of Europe.

The founding father of the puppet genre is Elbert Tuganov, a son of an Estonian mother and

***Primavera*, a puppet film by Riho Unt and Hardi Volmer, now in production at Estonian animation studio, Nukufilm. © Nukufilm**

Ossetian father. Tuganov (born 1920) directed the first Estonian animation *Peetrikese Unenägu* (*Little Peter's Dream*, 1958). Altogether he went on to direct 37 films, mainly for children. Another classic master of Estonian puppet and object animation is Heino Pars (born 1925). His simple but effective object animation *Nael* (*Nail*, 1972) has received international fame. This was not usual in Soviet Estonia, where Moscow decided which films were allowed to go to the international festivals.

The most celebrated cel animation filmmakers are Rein Raamat (born 1931) and Priit Pärn (born 1946). Raamat directed among other folk tales *Suur Tõll* (*The Great Toll*, 1980) and the hectic *Põrgu* (*Hell*, 1983), which is based on Eduart Viiralt graphics from the Thirties. Priit Pärn's most remarkable film is without a doubt *Eine Murul* (*Breakfast on the Grass*, 1988), a layered absurd portrait of life in the crumbling Soviet Union. Pärn, who is also a cartoonist and graphic designer, is still actively working in animation.

The tradition of puppet film is carried on by Nukufilm Studio in Tallinn. Nukufilm (puppet film) was established in 1993 by five puppet film directors and a veteran photographer Arvo Nuut. It has a permanent staff of roughly 20 people. The cel animation group of Tallinnfilm divided into another new company, Eesti Joonisfilm (Estonian Cartoon Film). It is owned by seven animators and at the moment employs some 30 people.

Pärn considers the years 1986-92 to be the golden years of Estonian animation, "We had the freedom to do what we wanted and Moscow paid for it all."

Remnants of the Union

State-owned Tallinnfilm still exists, but no longer produces any new films. There are plans to sell the buildings and give the money to the new Estonian Film Foundation to build a studio with modern equipment. The sudden jump from a centralized state production system to a completely capitalist system was fatal for artistic animation in many parts of Europe. In Estonia the change was surprisingly smooth. The Soviet system to animation production was simple.

***Back to Europe* by Riho Unt. © Nukufilm.**

Tallinnfilm had a certain production quota per year for both puppet and cel animation. Once the content was accepted in Moscow there was both the time and resources to do the film.

Tallinnfilm had a highly qualified permanent staff and many Estonian painters, writers, designers and composers were involved in animation production. Even the internationally known Estonian composer Arvo Pärt has created music for sixteen puppet films. "If every animator would have started his own small studio, we would not have had any puppet animation in Estonia after five years [of independence]," says Nukufilm director, Arvo Nuut. Nukufilm uses the very same studio and building where puppet animation was done in Tallinnfilm times. Only the name of the street has changed, as so many did after independence. The old and heavy, but reliable, Soviet-made 35mm cameras are still used together with new Asian-made computers.

Every movie is still shot on 35mm film. Nuut has collected a filmography of Estonian puppet animation over the past forty years. The latest film is number 219 on a list where series are counted as one. Many of the well known Estonian puppet animators still work for Nukufilm, like Kalju Kivi (born 1947), Mati Kütt (born 1947) and Rao Heidmets (born 1956). Heidmets has made highly original films like, Papa Carlo Teater (Father Carlo's Theater, 1988), Noblesse Oblige (1989) and Elutuba (Living Room, 1994). A younger generation works there as well. Mikk Rand and Priit Tender are working together on a new project. Tender's Joonisfilm-produced cel animation Gravitatsioon (Gravitation, 1996) won the prize for best first film at the Oslo Animation Festival last April.

A Unique Opportunity

Estonia is located next to the Nordic countries and has especially close ties to Finland. Via sea the Finnish capital of Helsinki and Tallinn are only about 80 kilometers apart. Realizing the large differences between Nordic and Estonian salaries, one would expect Estonia to have become a mere subcontractor for Nordic and European animation. However, this isn't the case. Nukufilm and Joonisfilm have created a niche that is difficult to obtain even in many big European countries that have substantial public support for film; Nukufilm is able to make, funded, non-commercial adult animated films. There is public spending for animation in Estonia, according to Nuut. Nukufilm has received some of this funding for most of it's films. "Auteur-films will never bring back their expenses, but if you cannot do good auteur-films, you can't do good commercial films either," Nuut believes. Nukufilm has done work for abroad as well. In 1994, the studio made a 24-part Christmas calendar for Icelandic television. In 1995, they participated in the Nordic co-production of Hreidar the Stupid and in 1996-97, the studio completed 13, six-minute parts of Urpo & Turpo, a childrens' series for a Finnish producer.

***Back to Europe* took three years to do. Shooting lasted for one and a half years. - Riho Unt**

A Continuing Reputation

Connections to Russia are few and far between despite the many years of Soviet domination. "Before we had something to do with them all the time; someone visited Moscow every now and then. Now it's even more difficult to get a visa to Russia than to China," explained Nuut. With the neighboring Latvian animators relationships are much better since Latvians visit Estonia and vice versa. Puppet animation production in the Latvian capital of Riga started in 1965. Latvian puppet animator Janis Cimermanis, who does children's films, works there. Her best known work is probably Avarijas Brigade (Rescue Team), a funny series of three unfortunate, but clever, rescuers.

Nuut thinks animation still has a good reputation in Estonia. "It is one hundred percent sure that everyone in Estonia knows Priit Pärn," he said. "And they know Heiki Ernits and Hardi Volmer." Ernits is

The production set for *Back to Europe* in Nukufilm's studio. © Nukufilm.

an animator who also works as a political cartoonist for the main newspaper. Multi-talented Volmer not only makes puppet animation but also sings in a popular rock band, Singer Vinger, and directs feature films. His latest film, Minu Leninit (My Lenins, 1997), is a sharp satire of a Lenin cult, a story about a school for Lenin doubles. "The animators have an unusually good education from the art schools and co-operation with the theater and other fields of art are working well," said Nuut.

Priit Pärn agrees with Nuut about the strong status of animation in Estonia. He thinks one main reason for it is the high quality of political cartoons and graphic art. "But that was also the case in Lithuania, where they even had a more developed cinema industry than we had. However, they only got a cel animation studio in the '80s," Pärn recounted. "However, there is also always a place for coincidences."

But what would you then say? That life in the Soviet Union was bad? Everyone knew it.
- Priit Pärn

Pärn remembers that in Soviet Estonia it was allowed to do animation for an adult audience, however, in other parts of the Union it was usually forbidden. Paradoxically an artist did profit from some parts of the Soviet's closed system. In regards to the sparse foreign influence, Pärn says, "When I started I had no patterns to follow, I only knew what I'd like to do myself."

Today's Production

One of the leading puppet animators in Estonia at the moment is Riho Unt. He's been working with Hardi Volmer quite extensively. They are now shooting a new film Primavera. It's a puppet animation about, as Unt puts it, "the love-life of insects for adults." The four-man camera crew shoots 15 seconds per day. Unt, who is also a good cartoonist, has designed all of the puppets. The seven-minute long, 35mm, color animation is a typical Nukufilm work, based on an original story and financed with Estonian money. Unt (born 1956) has been educated as an interior architect, but he only works occasionally in this profession. His first puppet animation, Imeline Nääriöö (Wonderous New Year Night, 1984), he did in conjunction with Hardi Volmer (born 1957).

In Liisa Helminen and Riho Unt's puppet animated children's series, *Urpo & Turpo*, Turpo practices karate with slices of bread. © Nukufilm.

"It was a Christmas film, but because in the Soviet Union Christmas was forbidden, it was called New Year's instead," Unt explained smiling. Soda (War, 1987) was a mature political story of bats and rats living in an old mill. This 20-minute puppet film was again directed by both Unt and Volmer. It discusses the suffocating tragedies of Estonian history with brilliant puppet animation and a well crafted story. I clearly remember the astonishment it caused among the public in it's first international screening at the Tampere Short Film Festival in March 1988.

At the same festival the Grand Prix was given to Priit Pärn's Eine Murul, another absolute world class animation. Pärn considers the years 1986-92 to be the golden years of Estonian animation, "We had the freedom to do what we wanted and Moscow paid for it all."

In independent Estonia, Unt has made, among others, two films about a farmer Saamuel, Kapsapea (Cabbage Head, 1993, 30 minutes) and Tagasi Euroopasse (Back to Europe, 1997, 38 minutes). The animation and set design in both films are of excellent quality. "Back to Europe took three years to do. Shooting lasted for one and a half years," Unt explained. It is easy to believe, the film is done with extreme care and contains a lot of action. The story reflects Estonian life from a satirical point of view. Unt was also co-director with Finnish director Liisa Helminen for seven episodes of Urpo & Turpo (1997). It is a funny and original series about two anarchic teddy bears living in an ordinary family. After twelve years in the animation industry and ten animated films, "It was my first experience directing animation for children," Unt said.

Unt might direct his first feature puppet animation in the near future. A European producer saw Back to Europe and proposed a feature film in the same style. "It would be one hour and twenty minutes

long, based on a classic fairy tale but all the characters would be pigs," Unt explained. "I was really interested in the script. It is not only a typical fairy tale, it also includes satire and irony." Studio director Nuut underlines, "No final decisions on the project have been made so far."

Moving Forward

Work is coming to Estonia in various ways. People from a Japanese department store saw Estonian animator Mati Kütt's film at a festival. They liked it and asked him to do four commercials for them. The Japanese came to Estonia and Kütt even traveled to Japan. Now the films are made and the quality speaks for itself.

When I got a prize in the Bilbao Festival I heard about it half a year later by accident. - Priit Pärn

What fascinates Unt about puppet films? "It's my way of living. There is the third dimension that cel animation lacks. There are possibilities to invent much more visually," he says. "We are optimistic, puppet film will live on in the future. Computers will not replace this genre and style."

Currently, Pärn is working at Joonisfilm studio on his new film The Night of the Carrots. On the other side of the studio Janno Põldma is thinking of new episodes for the childrens' serial Tom & Fluffy. This cel animation differs from most commercial television animation as it has more details and deeper content. "There is one thing that makes it difficult to sell," says Põldma. "It includes no violence."

Together Pärn and Põldma directed 1895 (1996), a very original story about the Lumiere brothers. I asked Priit Pärn about making animation in the Soviet Union. "In the West many people think that in the films there was some kind of special language that people in power didn't understand," Pärn says. "But what would you then say? That life in the Soviet Union was bad? Everyone knew it. The message in my films was that somewhere there is a guy who thinks in a strange, different way. The absurd films were against the monolithic system. You could draw a sausage and that was a message because there wasn't any sausage. Everyone knew it, but that was not the point. The point is that someone did it."

The Soviet system was completely centralized. The filmmaker had nothing to do with a film after it was done. Access to festivals was limited, and beaurocrats decided which films were send abroad. "When I got a prize in the Bilbao Festival I heard about it half a year later by accident," Pärn said. It was also not clear that the animators were allowed to travel with the films. "I've seen a photo from an international animation festival - Annecy, I presume - that showed the Soviet delegation. Three out of the twelve were animators," Pärn remembered. He smiled as he remembered that nothing worked in the Soviet Union. "If they answered no to your script, you just went on and finally upon completion perhaps you had some success. From my experience as a newspaper cartoonist I knew where the edge was."

In other Soviet Republics, Moscow often demanded to see the work in different phases, however in Estonia it was first completed and then sent to Moscow for approval. The answer could be either, 'Okay,' or 'Do some changes,' or 'It might be screened in some parts of the country' or a complete 'No.' "I know two animated films

anno Põldma says the lack of violence in his cel animated series, *Tom & Fluffy*, makes it difficult to sell to broadcasters. © Nukufilm.

which were unacceptable to be screened. My Is the Earth Round? from 1977 could only be distributed in Estonia and Andrei Khrzhadanovsky's The Glass Concertina from 1968," Pärn recalled. The dedication at the beginning of Pärn's film Eine Murul (Breakfast on the Grass, 1988) says everything, "We dedicate our film to the artists who did everything they were permitted to do." No matter what the political system is, the task and dilemma of an artist remains the same.

An exhibit of Priit Pärn's work can be seen in the AWN Gallery, on the Internet at:
http://www.awn.com/gallery/index.html.

Heikki Jokinen is a freelance critic and journalist living in Helsinki, Finland. He specializes in comics and animation and has curated retrospectives and Estonian animation programs for a number of film festivals. He's a board member of ASIFA Nordic, the ASIFA regional body for the five Nordic and three Baltic states.

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Spur Worldwide Licensing Activity

by Karen Raugust

Wallace & Gromit, those lovable, merchandisable clay characters. © Aardman

Wallace & Gromit, the stars of three short films directed by Nick Park of Bristol, U.K.-based Aardman Animations, have inspired a wide range of licensed merchandise both at home and abroad. This despite the fact that the stop-motion animated shorts in which they appear lack the extensive worldwide exposure that many traditional animation licensing programs receive.

For Aardman, licensing and ancillary rights activity, which includes everything from television and theatrical distribution to home video, publishing, new media and online, as well as merchandising, is important in that it financially and promotionally supports the company's primary business, the production of entertaining, high-quality animation.

"We don't select our properties on the basis of licensing potential," says Liz Keynes, Head of Rights and Licensing for Aardman Animations. On the other hand, as a creative studio that must internally finance product development before it is in a position to generate revenue from a film, Aardman views merchandising and other ancillary rights as effective methods to help fund new production. "The reality is that our form of filmmaking is quite expensive, so ancillary rights are very important," Keynes says.

Products of Quality

Aardman's merchandising philosophy, which it implements in partnership with its licensing agent, BBC Worldwide Licensing, is to authorize "products of a certain standard and quality that somehow embody the intrinsic brand characteristics," says Keynes. The company tries to create unique items, in addition to supplying conventional licensed merchandise categories. Aardman also wants to maintain a sense of fun and inventiveness in its licensing efforts. Whenever possible, Aardman and the BBC give the nod to three-dimensional products since, unlike most animation licensing programs, the Wallace & Gromit characters themselves are 3-D, made of plasticine. Aardman and the BBC also favor items that "Wallace & Gromit might use or find fun or amusing," says Keynes.

The top-ranked Wallace & Gromit merchandise outlets in the U.S. are Learningsmith, Store of Knowledge, Musicland and the catalog Signals, all specialty retailers.

Approximately 70 licensees are signed for the British market, with about the same number on board for the rest of the world combined. Examples of licensed products and promotions for Wallace & Gromit include: Wensleydale cheese, which features prominently in the characters' life style; a Kellogg's corn flakes promotion, which reflects the importance of breakfast as portrayed in the films; a tie-in with a tea company; a 3-D talking alarm clock featuring Peter Sallis, who is the voice of Wallace; an intricately designed shaving mirror created by one of Aardman's modelmakers, which looks as if it could have been a prop; and a concept-based plush toy range where the items represent scenes, such as Gromit sitting in a chair reading the newspaper.

Targeting Adults

Products are primarily targeted at adults, which is unusual for animation licensing programs. "That's worked really well for us," says Keynes. "It's a relatively unexploited market, especially in the U.K." Merchandise is sold through upscale retailers such as gift shops and department stores, rather than through mass merchants. Because just three short Wallace & Gromit films exist, A Grand Day Out, The Wrong Trousers and A Close Shave, and each takes a long time to produce, the property lacks the exposure that characterizes most animation licensing programs. "We produce very few films and work very slowly, so what we can do with those films [in terms of ancillary rights] is very important" as far as creating awareness, Keynes says.

Wallace & Gromit have taken the British market by storm, with more than 70 licensees offering everything from alarm clocks to toothbrush toppers.

"We never produce the sort of volume of material that is expected, especially in the American market and the Japanese market."

"It's without ongoing, constant media," agrees Kathie Fording, executive director, new business development, at United Media Enterprises, the licensing sub-agent for Wallace & Gromit in the United States and Canada. "That's why we're not going for the children's market. Without that [media support] we can't sustain either a kids or a mass market program." The films are aired periodically in the U.S. on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

Fording notes, however, that the lack of awareness is not as much of a drawback as might be expected in the North American market. "The videos have tremendously helped exposure," she says. In addition, the property's uniqueness appeals to potential licensees. Fording points out that while Wallace and Gromit does not generate the huge licensed merchandise sales that some other animation licensing programs do, it is also not limited by a short window of opportunity. "It's got classic written all over it," she says.

Abroad in the Territories

To expand the program outside Britain, Aardman and the BBC have appointed sub-agents in each territory. "We work with them to finesse the strategy and make sure it's appropriate," says Keynes. The overall licensing program is similar across territories in terms of strategy, products and distribution, but there are some differences from country to country depending on the local customs, but "always keeping the overall strategy in view." For example, in Japan, where the core audience for licensed products in general is 16- to 30-year-old females, Wallace & Gromit merchandise is re-styled somewhat to appeal to this demographic. For example, the plush line features a younger, cuter-looking Gromit.

Similarly, Keynes notes that Fox Home Video's marketing effort surrounding the home video in the U.S., which has sold more than 2 million units, was targeted somewhat more toward children than the video campaign by BBC Video in the U.K. In addition, certain products that are viewed as too specific to the British market are not included in the U.S. effort. These include the Wensleydale cheese, which is not a food widely eaten (or even recognized) by Americans.

The fact that Wallace & Gromit is a quintessentially British property does not seem to affect licensing abroad.

Otherwise though, licensed merchandise in the U.S. remains primarily adult-targeted, as it is in Britain. Products largely fall into the realm of gifts, stationery and collectibles, such as calendars, mousepads, board games, plush, social expressions products (including greeting cards) and neckwear. In some cases, U.S. companies distribute British products within North America; for example, Polygram sells t-shirts produced by a British company, Deluxe, in the U.S. and Canada, while Andrews & McMeel distributes The Cheese Lover's Diary, a British licensed product, in the U.S.

Retail distribution in North America is similar to Britain as

This size comparison chart from Aardman's detailed licensing style guide indicates the Pantone color numbers used for each character. © Aardman.

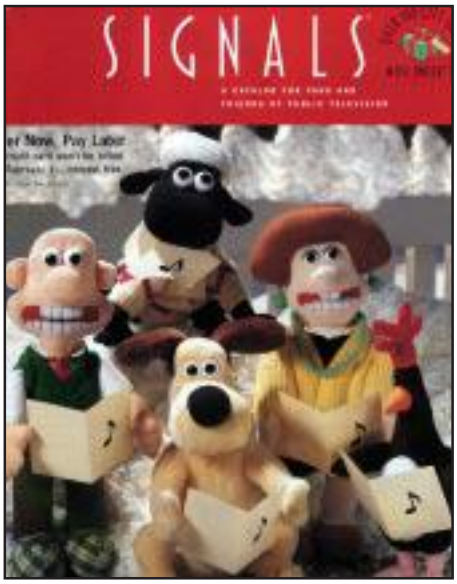
well. The top- ranked Wallace & Gromit merchandise outlets in the U.S. are Learningsmith, Store of Knowledge, Musicland and the catalog Signals, all specialty retailers. They have boutiqued the licensed merchandise with the videos to make a bigger impression on customers, and some, such as Store of Knowledge, occasionally hire walkaround Wallace & Gromit characters to increase visibility. Signals has featured the property on the cover of two different catalogs.

A U.K. Base

The fact that Wallace & Gromit is a quintessentially British property does not seem to affect licensing abroad. Fording believes that adults find the British humor quirky and fun, and enjoy the films' attention to detail and the intricate story lines. Children, meanwhile, like the physical humor and the man-and-dog relationship, while the British humor goes over their heads.

"Wallace & Gromit are almost an institution in the U.K. People know Nick Park and he's a celebrity." - Kathie Fording, United Media Enterprises

The main difference between the licensing program in the U.K. and those throughout the rest of the world is the fact that the property has been around longer in Britain than elsewhere. "Wallace & Gromit are almost an institution in the U.K. People know Nick Park and he's a celebrity," says Fording. "I'm not so sure his name is as well known [in the U.S.] as in the U.K. The fact that the property is just emerging in many territories means that the licensing is in its earlier stages there than it is in mature territories such as Britain."



The Holiday 1997 cover of the Signals catalog, which offers specialty and imported Wallace & Gromit merchandise to the U.S. market via mail-order.

Although Aardman Animations has retained the BBC as its worldwide licensing agent and maintains a network of sub-agents around the world, the company remains very involved in the licensing and merchandising effort surrounding Wallace & Gromit. Aardman staff determine the strategy for the program, in conjunction with the BBC, and sign off on every licensing deal. They create the style guides, produce the original 3-D models used for product molds and contract all illustrated work used on products and packaging.

In addition, the studio oversees photo shoots to supply new artwork to authorized manufacturers for use in licensed products. Since only a limited amount of film materials exist, creating new design themes in the style guide and providing additional transparencies featuring the characters are critical aspects of keeping the property fresh over time.

Feathers McGraw from *The Wrong Trousers*. © Aardman.

In addition to continuing its licensing and merchandising efforts for Wallace and Gromit, Aardman is looking ahead to its first full-length feature film, Chicken Run, which is scheduled to be released in 2000. DreamWorks SKG, which will distribute the film in the U.S. and in most other territories outside Europe, was recently named the exclusive worldwide licensing and merchandising rights holder for the film. Aardman's Keynes predicts that the strategy for Chicken Run will be much different from Wallace & Gromit. The movie will have a far greater level of global exposure than the three Wallace & Gromit films, but will also offer a shorter window of opportunity for licensing and other ancillary rights.

Karen Raugust is the author of several books and reports on licensing and entertainment, including The Licensing Business Handbook, International Licensing: A Status Report *(both available from EPM Communications, New York) and* Merchandise Licensing for the Television Industry *(available from Focal Press, Newton, Mass.). She also writes about licensing, animation and other topics for publications including* The Hollywood Reporter, Publishers Weekly *and* Animation Magazine, *and acts as a consultant to the licensing and entertainment industries. She is the former Executive Editor of* The Licensing Letter.

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Performance Animation: Behind the Character

by Heather Kenyon

Motion-capture is such a new form of animation that even the name for this animation technique is still in flux. Medialab has constantly been on the cutting edge of developing performance animation technology, announcing major advances to its proprietary software at regular intervals. Since the company was founded in 1989 in Paris, they have created some 30 characters including Nickelodeon U.K.'s Bert the Fish and Elvis, Pepe the Cricket from Steve Barron's The Adventures of Pinocchio and Cleo, who appears on Canal+'s Cyberflash, a show about cyber-culture. Medialab specializes in computer puppetry, which is a subset of the motion-capture by computer field. Computer puppetry differs from motion-capture in that the results of human body motion are fully rendered in real-time, as the motion is performed. Therefore, animation directors and performers can see the performance instantaneously and can then apply immediate corrections if needed. Medialab creates computer puppetry by combining this real-time capability with sophisticated devices to track not only human body motion but also facial expressions and lip synchronization.

One may have seen the workings of motion-capture before: a computer generated character is moved by an actor in a suit, who is connected to a renderer which in turn moves the CG character. However, we are going to take you through the process of creating a believable, computer generated character by going behind the scenes at Medialab Studio LA in Los Angeles, California. We are going to meet Drew Massey, a performer, Marcus Clarke, who has specifically trained people to work in the motion-capture industry and one of Medialab's foremost technical developers, Herve Tardif.

© Medialab

Motion-capture is a great outlet for a traditional puppeteer. - Drew Massey

The Actor's Role

Naturally a major factor of performance animation is the performer. However, I found the typical background of such a performer to be a surprise. One such example is puppeteer and performance animator, Drew Massey. Massey recently performance animated "Broz" for VDTV at the Western Cable Show and interacted live with audiences.

Heather Kenyon: Your bio says you're both a puppeteer and a performance animator. Can you explain the differences between these two different professions?

Drew Massey: Actually, with the technology at Medialab there's not a lot of difference. It's pretty much performing with real-time computer generated puppets.

HK: 'Performance animator': does that term apply to both the puppeteer working on the body and the face of a character?

DM: It's all the same thing. I do a lot of traditional hand puppetry as well, muppet style. With that you're controlling the head and the body of a character. No matter which way you split it up, hopefully, you are blending the performances of both people and making one believable character.

HK: What is your background?

DM: Standard puppetry. I've been

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involved in several movies, like The Flintstones and Men in Black. Those movies involved puppeteering with either cable-operated characters and sometimes some traditional hand puppetry, as well as a lot of electronic and servo animated characters.

HK: So you come from a puppetry background rather than an acting background? I am surprised you aren't an actor.

DM: As soon as I started getting into puppeteering, I started taking acting classes. I took acting in college and I'm an illustrator too. The process of making art move has always been very attractive to me. It's all about the character, so if you don't have any sort of acting background, it's a lot more difficult to make a believable character. The fact that I'm making all of the movements and voice choices doesn't get in the way. I started out as a puppeteer but I've become a much better actor because of it.

HK: Why did you get involved in motion-capture?

DM: Because its cool! I really like computer animation. There's almost nothing more satisfying than seeing computer animation respond to your every move. It's just a blast. When it works well, it works really well. Motion-capture is a great outlet for a traditional puppeteer.

HK: How much do you work for Medialab?

DM: I go in at least once a week, sometimes twice. It depends. Mostly, I experiment with the system and figure out what I can do with it. It turns out to be quite a lot. Really I just get my own skills down to the point where creating a believable character is almost effortless.

HK: Is the demand for your services growing?

DM: I think it is growing. I know a lot of studios who are just doing motion-capture. Medialab is the only company, however, that's really concerned about getting whole characters together and hiring puppeteers and actors to do it. That was the thing that attracted me to Medialab in particular. They are so performance-oriented. It seems to me a lot of other companies are hiring mainly mimes or people who are specifically dancers and capturing their motion for a particular thing. Medialab is really concerned with bringing the whole thing together.

HK: When you're acting and talking to something that isn't there. What are your biggest challenges to make that look real?

DM: That's interesting. That's something you have to get used to as a puppeteer, the different portions of the body. When I see people that are really into dance, and really concerned with their body, it takes them a longer time to get used to it because they are not familiar with being outside their own bodies. Typically their bodies are the final medium. Every time I'm on a job I'm looking at [the] monitors, the camera's view of the puppet, and playing to that, so it's not that strange for me.

Actor Paul Pistore gives the voice and facial expressions to the character "Broz." © Medialab

HK: How do you approach playing different characters?

DM: Like any acting job. I like it because the characters are so physically different. It's easier to get into their specific behaviors. It's easier to

act different when you look so darn different.

Developing Performance Skills

Taking puppetry into the 21st century demands a completely new set of skills. Massey is one of the puppeteers who successfully auditioned to be trained by Marcus Clarke and Helena Smee when Medialab Studio LA opened. In addition to working with Jim Henson's studio in the U.K., Clarke has worked with Medialab in Paris and Japan and was sent to the new Los Angeles-based studio in January, 1997 to develop and train a pool of performance animators. A select group was chosen to hone a special skill set that would enable them to adapt their art and bring virtual characters alive using Medialab's technology and devices.

Heather Kenyon: What kind of background do most of your trainees have overall?

Marcus Clarke: In the past we've experimented with a general group of performers. Performance animation is basically divided up into the person in the suit and the person who does the facial animation. The first thing you have to do is introduce what performance animation is to the group. Basically I'm looking for performance skills, people who can express themselves. You're looking for people who understand the primacy of the screen image. By that I mean, you quite often get performers who are feeling a lot of what they do internally, but because of the technique that we use, we need actors to realize their emotions on the screen. What we've found in the past, is that mime actors, from the nature of their work, relate everything to themselves. Likewise with dancers, who would seem to be the natural people to put in the costumes, they're doing wonderful movements but often because the character is a different dimension to themselves, we have collision problems. That's the number one thing, whereby the characters arm is going through its leg or body. What we need are performers who can look at the monitors and straight away get the dimensions, proportions, of those characters into their mind, then look at the screen. Then its almost an animation process of finding what kind of rhythms work, in terms of walks, which kind of weight shifts work. Sometimes you'll find yourself doing something really strange, unnatural, but on screen, the character looks like he's walking brilliantly.

Likewise for the face, many successful characters are cartoonish. What you try to do is not put a realistic person on the screen, you try to put a performance on the screen. You have to really just be looking at what kind of facial gestures, working hand in hand with the body, transfer.

Mimicking reality doesn't work.
- Marcus Clarke

What the connection is between doing a hand puppet and going into a body costume is odd at first but when you think it through, it involves control, and thinking about how the characters should move. Most puppeteers can get a cardboard box to walk around, an inanimate object. Both require animation skills and dexterity. It's all happening on a subconscious level. Character creation's a bit of mystery, I think, to everybody. You just know when it works. Maybe this relates to things like, when the synthesizer came along, and the computer in terms of graphics. People thought, 'Drawing skills will be dead,' or, 'Being able to play the guitar will be dead.' Yet a lot of the people who succeeded with electronic music have a good understanding of music.

HK: What do you think are the dominant skills a performance animator has?

MC: Character creation, number one. The next thing is dedication. To become a good hand puppeteer is very hard work. If you didn't really, really want to do it, if you weren't obsessed with it, you wouldn't do it, because at the end of the day you're a puppeteer, not a qualified taxi driver. Something important!

HK: What is the most unique aspect of performance animation? That applies only to performance animation?

MC: You can perform a cartoon character in real-time. That's not the same as doing a key frame character in CG, a hand-drawn animation character or a puppet character. Certainly that's what attracts me.

HK: It looks like you just put on this suit, you move, and the character moves just like you...

MC: That's the worst thing you can do. Mimicking reality doesn't work. Often producers think, 'Well this is great. We can just stick an actress in the costume, put a face reader on." You can do all that, but you'll find it's not believable. If that was the case, I'm sure actors like Robert DeNiro wouldn't be paid what they are. That's like if someone comes across a puppet like Miss Piggy and puts their hand inside, then wonders, "Why isn't it happening?"

HK: Do you see the demand [for motion-capture] growing?

MC: I hope so. I love working on the Medialab system. Sometimes when a new technology comes in it doesn't have a direct application because there are certain conventions already set up. Animators have said motion-capture isn't very useful. You have people who've had bad experiences with the early development of the technology. It takes awhile for people to say, 'This is a useful tool. This is better.' When you have a new tool, there's often a little lag before it comes into common acceptance. I think that's what's happening now.

The Technical Process

Herve Tardif is one of the code writers based in Paris whose knowledge of Medialab's proprietary Clovis system (the engine that drives the real-time factor) is practically unparalleled. Clovis was first developed in 1989. Tardif is now going to take us through the technical side of making a character move and, more importantly, act believably.

Herve Tardif: One notion that is very important is the idea of skeletons. We are going to have one real person wear a number of sensors. These sensors measure the position and the orientation of the segment on which they are attached. We are working with electro-magnetic technology, which consists of one source emitting a field and a receiver measuring that field. After some processing, it gives information on the position and orientation. With this information we are able to build a skeleton that is going to be exactly or very close to the skeleton of the real person. We will have a copy of the real person. That copy amounts to building a skeleton of the real actor, and attaching the different values received by the sensors to the proper segment of the skeleton we just built. You can imagine conceptually at that stage, we have a skeleton that moves exactly the same way the person moves. That kind of information is already useful for our work. For people who are interested in the motion acquisition business, that is pretty much what they expect: a skeleton along with the orientation of each of the segments of the skeleton.

Actress Lydee Walsh wearing the Medialab bodysuit. The sensors on the suit are picked up by an electromagnetic field being emitted from underneath the stage she is standing on. © Medialab.

Another application, which is our most common application, is indeed to drive virtual characters. At that stage we have a skeleton, which is a copy of the real person, and another skeleton of the built, or virtual character. These skeletons may be very different because we may want to animate a gorilla, or a very thin woman, or a very big and fat character. There are many chances that the skeleton of the virtual character will differ greatly from the real actor. At that stage, what we do is a mapping of one skeleton to the other. This gets very tricky and it's where we have a lot of proprietary information. This is a major issue for all people involved in motion acquisition [motion-capture]. When the proportions are quite the same, it's just a straight adaptation. It's easy. But when the proportions are different, it can get pretty tricky.

Usually there are a couple of things we need to insure. These things are usually the location of the feet on the ground. We do mathematics to insure that our virtual character will always have his feet on the ground. Starting from there we can go up the hierarchy of the skeleton, and take the values from the real actor and place them on our virtual skeleton. Once we've done that, when the real character moves, the virtual character moves. The more different the virtual character is from the real actor, the more different the motion is going to be. Suppose the script says that the character should scratch his head. With the two skeletons being different, it is very unlikely that when the real actor scratches his [own]

head that the virtual character will indeed scratch his head. But if we show the result of the virtual character, the puppeteer will adjust to that and if he or she is asked that the virtual character scratch his head again, he or she may expand his or her motion further away, maybe go behind the head or before the head but on the screen the results are going to look like what we are expecting. They rely heavily on visual feedback of the virtual character in order to do motion that will be the required action.

Heather Kenyon: Can you talk a little bit about how the facial movements are done and the lip synchronization?

HT: Again, with respect to these things, we rely heavily on the puppeteers. We use a multiple object interpolation technique. For example, we have our computer graphic artists design extreme positions for the mouth. Let's take a sample case: We have a face and we want to open and close the mouth. We may have an expression of sadness and one of happiness. What we're going to do is to have several extreme positions. The puppeteers control the characters through a set of variables. One could be the opening of the mouth and another the mood. Now, if you put these two expressions, or variables, on a glove, they will be able to play independently as the character opens and closes it's mouth. Then it's pretty much up to the puppeteer to give the virtual character some lively expression by moving his fingers. The example that I have just described to you is a very simple one. But you can imagine that you can have more degrees of expression with more variables. Common variables are the opening of the mouth and the mood. It can also be mouth expressions. We are very careful in the design process to model the expressions so that they are workable.

As far as the lip synchronization is concerned we have two major techniques. One manual technique where the puppeteer is doing the lip synchronization. In this technique, the puppeteer listens to the voice material [recording] and does the lip synch by hearing the soundtrack and manipulating his fingers so that he gives the impression that the virtual character is talking. This is very difficult and you need very talented puppeteers.

Our goal is to come up with a system that TV channels could use or even direct live television. - Herve Tardif

The second technique that we derived only came recently because we realized that we couldn't always rely on talented puppeteers. For some productions, they may not be available. We decided it would be a good idea to have some method of automatic lip synch. We started this very efficiently with the help of a small company called Ganymedia in France. These people have a lot of experience in voice recognition. The way that the technique works is that the voice talent produces the soundtrack that we want the virtual character to say. The voice talent is filmed with a camera just in front of him, with his lips painted in blue. With this, and the help of some recognition techniques, we are able to derive the opening of the mouth in real time and the roundness of the mouth. These two parameters are then fed into our system, instead of having a puppeteer doing the opening of the mouth and the roundness of the mouth. Since it's automatic it tends to work better for not-so-talented or not-so-experienced puppeteers. The system will allow us to detect even more mouth forms than roundness and opening. We are currently talking with these people in France in order to improve an automatic lip-synch system so that it can detect more mouth positions. It is our belief that this technique will work better for realistic characters. We do not plan on using this technique for non-realistic characters. We will stick to the first technique that is done totally by puppeteers.

HK: What kind of hardware are you using to render these images in real-time?

HT: We are using, expansively, SGI. We have a decent product because SGI goes from not-so-cheap to very expensive. We have characters that can work on the Octane workstation which costs roughly 400,000 French francs [US $80,000]. We have some character working on Octane which is mid-range, and we also have some very well refined and detailed characters that run on Onyx workstations. This is the top of the line.

HK: How are these electro-magnetic signals fed from the person to these machines?

HT: This is another part of the equipment. Basically, the system provides you with position and orientation of a certain number of sensors. We feed this information into the SGI machine. We have our software on the SGI machine that reads these values and adapts them.

HK: So this is predominately proprietary software?

HT: Yes. Except for hardware, the

majority of our software is proprietary.

HK: What functions does this proprietary software allow you to do that is unique to Medialab?

HT: It's more of a whole package, an overall level. I have seen companies that do a very good job in terms of rendering characters or motion acquisition, but I haven't seen companies that can really animate a character the way we do in real-time. Our software has been designed to do real-time animation and to be used to produce TV animated series.

We are now capable of doing real-time characters with shadows. We are also able to use our system on a real live set. When it comes to compositing computer graphics with real live shooting, there is one notion that is very important and that is coherency between the real world and the virtual. For instance, when you have a real character talking to a virtual one, you need to pay a lot of attention to your cameras. We came up with a way of calibrating the virtual camera with the real camera. It's a very simple process that allows us to integrate, in a very believable manner, the virtual character with a real environment. This process works with fixed cameras that do not move. One very big improvement would be to allow for camera motion. This gets into the field of virtual studios. Recently, we have been working with a company called Symahvision. They offer a system that can track a real camera, shooting a real live scene, and then provide us with camera positions to match our virtual camera position. With this system we should be able to integrate virtual characters with a live set. This is going to increase the credibility of the compositing. It's one thing to see a virtual character talking with a real person, but having these two characters filmed with a moving camera is really something else. It adds a lot. It is a very large technical difficulty. We are going to use that system in production very soon. We are in an extensive test period. We are trying to use the system on a show which is being produced for a TV channel in France.

The computer, running Medialab's proprietary Clovis software, combines the information coming from the two actors. © Medialab.

HK: When do you think we can expect to see this?

HT: March. Recently, we switched to a wireless system. We used to use a wired system where the actor was linked to an electronic unit, with 16 cables which really restricts the motion. That was one of the major drawbacks. Now we are working with a company called Ascension Technologies. We've been using that wireless system for over a year now and it's giving some pretty good results. We can now have an actor walking on a stage without him or her being linked to any wires. Before we couldn't roll on the ground or turn around many times. Now we can do all of this very well. We even have someone doing gymnastics like backflips right now at the studio.

HK: Where is the future of this technology?

HT: Our goal is to come up with a system that TV channels could use or even direct live television. We are working on the camera issue because we know they will want that. We will also probably see several characters. Right now we have one character when we shoot. When we record, we do one character at a time. In the future we will have multiple characters interacting. There is a huge number of difficulties to get to that, combining the two worlds is difficult and we need to be very precise.

HK: How far away do you think that is?

HT: We already did that on some shows. The level of interaction is low, because it is difficult, but I believe that very soon, probably this year, you shall see some virtual characters interacting. We've been in the field for six years now and it's getting to a point where people at some TV channels in the U.S. are ready to go for it. It's already being used in Europe by Canal +, TF1, FR2 and Nickelodeon UK.

Note: The online version of this article contains two Quicktime movies of Medialab's "virtual characters" in action.
http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.11/2.11pages/2.11kenyonmedialab.html

Heather Kenyon is Editor-in-Chief of Animation World Magazine.

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

How'd They Do That?: Stop-Motion Secrets Revealed

compiled by Heather Kenyon

On October 9, 1997, Nick Park and Peter Lord made a rare Los Angeles appearance at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as part of the Marc Davis Animation Lecture Series. The at-capacity crowd was very attentive to the presentation. However, a special hush fell over the audience as Nick explained that the soap bubbles and water with which Gromit washes windows in A Close Shave was actually created using a combination of clear hair gel and glass beads. We asked six stop-motion maestros to reveal a few more tricks of the trade: Henry Selick, Barry Purves, David Fain, Andrew Ruhemann, Voltaire and Mikk Rand. Here's what they had to say:

I can't look at one of my death scenes now, without smelling of spearmint! -Barry Purves

Henry Selick *(U.S.)*
Director, The Nightmare Before Christmas, James and The Giant Peach

"In The Nightmare Before Christmas there is a grotesque fountain in the town square that looks to be choking itself. The trick was the water. What we did was make a series of replacement sculptures out of translucent plastic and used a replacement cycle. We didn't use any water at all. We based the movement on traditional animation and then cast it in a queer resin."

In *The Wrong Trousers'* train chase scene, animators moved the wall in the background to create a realistic motion blur. © Aardman.

Barry Purves *(U.K.)*
Director, Next, Screen Play, Rigoletto, Achilles

"For blood, I use a cosmetic toothpaste. It's red and slightly dyes the gums a deeper shade, in effect making the teeth whiter. Mixed with a little glycerin to make it look wet, it's easily animatable and does not run or dry out. Unfortunately, it smells of spearmint. I can't look at one of my death scenes now, without smelling of spearmint!. . . . KY lubrication jelly is also wonderful for tears."

This gruesome scene from Barry Purves' *Screen Play* used a special red toothpaste to simulate blood. © Bare Boards Productions.

David Fain *(U.S.)*
Animator, Action League Now!

"The show is an interesting hybrid of about 20% animation while the remaining 80% what we call "Chuckimation," which consists of puppeteering and hurling the characters past the camera. This previous season we've worked with a variety of substances ranging from Aloe Vera gel to simulate fried Alien, to mixing all three colors of Nickelodeon "Smud" with water and tempera paint to produce the substance Meltman oozes in the show's opening sequence."

I ended up creating a mixture of cinnamon, nutmeg, cayenne pepper and instant coffee grounds. - Voltaire

Andrew Ruhemann, Passion Pictures *(U.K.)*
Producer, Doppelganger.

"KY Jelly was used as a substitute for snot in the making of Doppelganger, a Reebok commercial. It was used to show that the evil Ryan Giggs double is a dirty, slovenly kind of chap!"

Voltaire *(U.S.)*
Director/animator, commercials (Sci-Fi Channel, MTV and USA Network)

"For a Halloween promo

that I animated for the Sci-Fi Channel, I had to create stop-motion skeletons with pumpkin heads. The skeletons were made of armature wire and plumber's epoxy. Plumber's epoxy is a resin that you mix and in four minutes it turns to stone. Needless to say you have to be a fast sculpt! I wanted the heads to be jack-o-lanterns, but for them to look dried out and old. Rather than the usual route which is sculpting them in clay, making a mold and then casting them in rubber, I made shrunken apple heads. I carved the faces directly into the apples and then let them dry out. It created a really wrinkly, old look.

"For the set I was looking for some kind of texture that would make the ground, which was primarily craft paper and water putty, look very earthy and organic. I ended up creating a mixture of cinnamon, nutmeg, cayenne pepper and instant coffee grounds. I then spray-mounted it to the paper and it really looked like earth. The nice thing is that each one of these powders has a distinctly different color to it, so by mixing them in different proportions and by individually sprinkling them, you end up getting a really organic modeled texture. All of the dried out foliage came from a dried flower and plant store. These thorny, seed casings and podlike things ended up giving the landscape a very macabre look. We used these instead of sculpting trees.

When we animated the film *Back to Europe*, directed by Riho Unt, we thought we had discovered making water by using hair gel! - Mikk Rand, Nukufilm

"At the very end of the spot there's a Victorian haunted mansion.

Voltaire's station id for The Sci-Fi Channel. Image courtesy of Voltaire.

We were getting down to the wire and hadn't yet built the house, so I sent one of my assistants to Starbucks and asked him to liberate about 200 wooden stirrers. We cut them like miniature wooden siding and built a little forced perspective house out of the stirrers. Then we spray painted the entire thing black. It is probably the quickest and cheapest mansion ever built!"

Mikk Rand, Nukufilm *(Estonia)*

"When we animated the film Back to Europe, directed by Riho Unt, we thought we had discovered making water by using hair gel!

"Anyway, here are a few more examples:

- *Cotton wool was used to imitate smoke and smog in Kaerajaan (Dir: Mikk Rand) and Back to Europe (Dir: Riho Unt). Cotton wool was also used to create snow in The Elf's Tree (Dir: Rao Heidmets) and The Elf's Coming (Dir: Heino Pars).*

- *Rice in water was used for falling snow in Underground (Dir: Mati Kutt) and Edgeland Tales by Mikk Rand & Priit Tender. We also use corn, rice, rye, wheat, barley and oats together in the water because they fall at different speeds and look more natural.*

- *Another way we have created snow was to use salt from Byelorussia [Republic of Belarus] for the film Christmas Story (Dir: Aarne Ahi).*

- *Licorice was used to imitate the maggots in Back to Europe (Dir: Riho Unt).*

- *Coffee made with half the liquid, so that it is extra strong, looks like oil. We used this technique in Back to Europe (Dir: Riho Unt)."*

Heather Kenyon is Editor-in-Chief of Animation World Magazine.

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California Summer School for the Arts: More Than an Education

by Jon Roslyn

Note: The photos in this article, courtesy of instructor and photographer Gary Schwartz, are intended for 3-D viewing. To view them properly, bring your face ten inches from the page and cross your eyes to blend the left and right images.

Prior to 1987 extremely talented, artistic high school students didn't have too many opportunities to meet with and learn from leaders in the entertainment field. Then the California State Summer School for the Arts [CSSSA] was created and this opportunity of a lifetime has been experienced by almost 4,500 young artists to date. The CSSSA began as a unique private/public partnership giving high school students a place to pursue seven different arenas of artistic interest in a summer camp type of setting. By 1992, the CSSSA's animation program had blossomed into a bona fide power house.

This in-depth, one month animation program for high school students was the brainchild of well-known animator Christine Panushka. Panushka has won notable awards including the 1986 Aspen Film Festival animation grand prize for *Nighttime Fears and Fantasies: A Bedtime Tale for a Young Girl.* and the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival for *The Sum of Them* in 1985. Recently, she has garnered attention and success with her online animation festival Absolut Panushka. Panushka, a visiting professor at USC's division of animation and visual arts, was given authority by Rob Jaffe, Director of the CSSSA, to chair the new CSSSA animation department. She hired faculty, developed programs, scheduled the students' days, and planned to teach animation history, life drawing and take the students to studios to spawn a new generation of innovative animators.

CSSSA students learn the abstract technique of drawing on film. 3-D photo courtesy of and © Gary Schwartz

Gary Schwartz, an Emmy and Oscar nominee, has been a faculty member for six years and was the first faculty member that Panushka brought on board. "The truth is we are jealous," said Schwartz, "We are giving the students what we wish we had when we were their age. I think it is the best program of its kind in the United States."

This in-depth animation program for high school students was the brainchild of Christine Panushka.

Ruth Hayes, an independent animator, agreed. "It is the high point of my teaching year," she said. "The students are wonderful to work with because they are so eager. It is great to work with them because they want to, not because they have to."

A Real Animation Program

A substantial animation program at the high school level was an idea so fresh, it was startling and Jaffe loved the concept. "In 1987, to my knowledge, animation wasn't taught in any high school. It was regarded more as a craft than an artistic application." (However, Dave Master, currently of Warner Bros. Feature Animation, did begin the La Puente Valley ROP Rowland High School animation class around this time.) The CSSSA is backed by a prestigious Board of Trustees and Directors that embody significant experience in all walks of the seven disciplines. Their network ensures that the school draws excellent teachers and guest lecturers.

The program was first based at Cal Arts, then moved to Loyola Marymount, where, ironically, there were no animation facilities. The next summer it was relocated back to Cal Arts, only to move again to Mills College. A final move for the summer of 1992 brought the program back again to Cal Arts where it has flourished. The program's growth curve would make any analyst proud. In 1989, 24 aspiring animators sketched until their fingers were raw. In 1997, 250 applicants vied for the fifty available slots.

Today the program has U.S. $600,000 in private endowments. Corporate sponsors are proud to be a part of this innovative program. The Walter Lantz Foundation recently contributed substantially in the form of a $100,000 grant that will be payable over four years and will initiate the Walter Lantz Foundation Endowment Fund. However, it isn't just the private sector that realizes

the importance of this program. Rosalie Zalis, Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor, explained, "The California Summer School for the Arts provides an opportunity for students representing all of California's unique diversity to increase their artistic, creative and problem-solving skills which will afford them the valuable tools necessary for today's emerging industries in entertainment and high technology." Participation such as this insures a steady stream of talented animators in years to come.

Students come from every conceivable group all throughout California. "The program is so diverse. From tiny rural areas to major metropolitan ones, this program gives students access to the arts that normally would not have it. For the first time they are exposed to a serious art experience," said Hayes. Moreover, the caliber of student is extraordinary. "They are smart, talented kids," Hayes continued. More than 50% of these students receive some scholarship assistance from the school. While students out of California are encouraged to apply, there are currently no scholarships available for them.

Students React

Former student, Corinne Lambalot raved, "I loved it. Before I went I wasn't sure I wanted to go into animation. After, I was motivated to be an animator. I'm making my portfolio a lot better to focus on animation as a major. I want to be a key character animator for Disney. Everyone was great and I made tons of friends."

Ursula Glaviano shares Corinne's enthusiasm. "The screening on the last day was incredible. Other people come from other departments and you get to hear their responses to your work. The program made me really, really sure that there were no other options for me but to go into animation."

In 1997, 250 applicants vied for the fifty available slots.

Monica Martinez loved the program so much, she's attended three times. "I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in art. Now I'm working on my portfolio and I want to major in experimental animation at Cal Arts." One student from Connecticut worked two waitressing jobs for a year in order to amass the $3,000 for out-of-state tuition. Clearly a testament to how seriously these students take their work and how beneficial and special they know the program to be.

Bobby Podesta is currently an animator on A Bug's Life at Pixar and had little art training before CSSSA. He was highly motivated and exhibited a second sense for motion in animation - one of the more difficult aspects of animation production to master. Seeing these gifts, professors saturated him and he loved every moment. "It is quite frankly one of the most amazing experiences of my life and if you talk to anyone at the program they will say the same. In mainstream school there just isn't anything like it."

From left to right: Christine Panushka, Phil Roman and Corny Cole. 3-D photo courtesy of and © Gary Schwartz.

The Application Process

Panushka warns applicants of common reasons for rejection. "Don't copy Simba or Spiderman," she said. "We always receive twenty to thirty of those. We want to see characters the students have created." Portfolio reviewers take notes on every applicant. Upon request, an unacceptable candidate can have a CSSSA staff member review their notes with them over the phone so that they may strengthen their portfolio for the following year. For consideration to enter, applicants present three pieces of still work: one technical, one exemplary of their character, and a third of their choice. They then explain each in writing. Students find out about the program through word of mouth, art classes in high school, and the organization's web site.

The four week summer program is one of seven departments at the CSSSA which includes visual arts, animation, music, film/video, writing, theater and dance. After a brief orientation, animation students immerse themselves in life drawing and animation screenings. One of the first exercises is to create a zoetrope. No matter who one speaks with, from students to faculty, the one word that is repeated is "intense." In fact, all of CSSSA's programs are designed to be taught at a college level. For the duration of the program, the students work six days a week and get little sleep.

Just because they're high school students, they're judged no less sternly than college animation students.

No Breaks

Today, several high schools have begun offering rudimentary animation programs. Budgetary restrictions at these other schools, however, mean supplies and computer programs are limited or out of date by the time students get them. Panushka noted, "We don't let our students use computers. They need to get animation in their hands, in their blood, to develop a sense of timing essential for believable character motion."

Just because they're high school students, they're judged no less sternly than college animation students. Panushka continued, "College students take one year to do one minute. Some of these kids do it in a week and a half. At the end, we splice together all the strips on one reel. Kids cheer and rejoice at the sight. I've never seen students work as hard as these."

Many benefits to the program are only apparent a few days into the course. The students mature. For some it's the first time they've been away from home. Perhaps, they've always been the strange kid that sits and draws in the back of the classroom. "You meet people who are just like you for the first time," Podesta explained. Schwartz related that indeed the students do change. "You see kids who are totally transformed human beings."

No matter who one speaks with, from students to faculty, the one word that is repeated is "intense."

The Curriculum

Students do a spectrum of activities but core basics like life drawing (taught by Cal Arts' master, Cornelius 'Corny' Cole) occur every day. One day might include life drawing, animation, then a visit to Disney. Students are required to go to theater and dance classes to help them understand movement. "We focus on introducing them to other art disciplines," Hayes confirmed. Another component of the day is an hour long screening of animation which can include works from Eastern European animators to early Fleischer cartoons. There are also talks with the likes of Craig Bartlett, creator of Hey, Arnold!, to French animation theorist and creator of Fantastic Planet, Rene Laloux. Not many local high schools offer such informal contact with industry stars and artistic visionaries. Guests from all walks of the industry, from recruiters to writers to production executives, donate generous amounts of their time.

Life drawing is a critical aspect of the CSSSA program. 3-D photo courtesy of and © Gary Schwartz

As the students follow the month long schedule, they march ever closer to their final project. In 1997, they were each given two weeks to create an animated piece by hand which had to be at least ten seconds long and include animation of flying, swimming or leaping, metamorphosis and the use of two colors and sound.

Students use paper cut outs, paintings, drawings and other materials to translate their ideas into visual images to be shown to their classmates at the end of the program on the premiere night. Students scream and shout, rejoicing in their artistic triumphs. They learn about animation, but they also get much more. They learn they must give everything they've got to succeed.

Results That Last

The program is now a decade old. The groundbreaking educational venture has reaped a rich harvest of gifted animators who are now ensconced in some of the most respected animation facilities in the world. CSSSA alums are in the ranks of such animation houses as Disney, Pixar and Warner Bros. Feature Animation among others. Podesta is currently working with five CSSSA alums at Pixar. "Now is when we are beginning to see the impact of the program in the artistic world," he said.

Parents are amazed by the behavioral changes in their young animators upon returning home. One mother wrote, "What did you do? My son's cleaning his room!" It takes a lot of focus and organization to make an animated movie. It's only natural that these traits would carry over into other aspects of students' lives. Hayes pointed out that the students "...have to go home and they have to figure out how to continue this artistic practice on their own without support."

The students walk away from the program with lifelong friendships, professional leads and a feeling of self-worth gained from when hundreds of drawings become a single living entity. "It was the first time I had seen something of my own move. It blows you away," Podesta confirmed.

Moreover, the program seems to be just as rewarding for the faculty. "If I were a millionaire, wherever I was, I'd come back to teach CSSSA and that's the truth," Gary Schwartz said. Panushka added, "Students come back all the time to say thank you. That's not something they have to do."

To learn more about the California State Summer School for the Arts and their upcoming March 1 application deadline, visit their web site (accessible from the AWN Animation Village, on the internet at http://www.awn.com/awneng/village.html) or contact them at the following address:

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The Havana Connection

by Cesar Coelho

One of the reasons one should visit Cuba during the month of December is the "Festival Internacional Del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano" (The International Festival of New Latin-American Cinema) which is held in Havana. In it's 19th year, the Havana film festival is the biggest cinematographic event dedicated entirely to Latin cinema. Spain and Latin-American countries participate with features, medium and short fiction films, documentaries, a poster and script contest, and last but not least, animated films. Besides the festival, Cuba itself is a marvelous attraction; not only for its natural beauty and breathtaking architecture, but for its people and their lifestyle which is based on values that are very different from ours.

Besides the festival, Cuba itself is a marvelous attraction...

A Festival With an Audience

During the two weeks of the festival, Havana is host to a multitude of film stars, producers, directors, intellectuals and critics. However, the festival's most respected participant is the Cuban audience. Cinema in Cuba is still a strong force, as it was in Brazil in the Sixties, when ticket prices were lower, theaters were bigger, and competition with television and the VCR wasn't a part of the scene. In Cuba, ticket prices are subsidized by the government, and their cost is the equivalent of US $0.35. As if that isn't enough, Cubans can buy a pass for the entire festival at US $0.94.

The Festival Internacional Del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano catalog.

Most theaters in Havana are quite old. However, when one arrives to this enchanting island, the first impression is to feel that you're thirty years back in time. The buildings are those from the Fifties and Sixties. On the streets, there is a constant display of vehicles that are 30, 40 and even 50 years old. These include well-maintained '57 Chevys! The same holds true for the cinemas. Most of them still have the big screening rooms which hold up to 1,000 and 1,500 seats and display a gigantic screen with a curtain that opens prior to the screening. I thought I would never see this again. The sound is okay, although the picture quality could be improved.

Cuban television, which is state-controlled, has very limited programming. Air time only runs for certain hours. The major attraction is the Brazilian soap operas which spread a fever among the population and lead the country into stasis.

The old world charm of Havana is seen in this photo of the Cine Prayet theater. Photo courtesy of and © Cesar Coelho.

Cinema is a major attraction for Cubans who flock to the festival screenings, creating long lines and packing all of the sessions. They are highly educated, and it's proven by this festival that they can be considered sharp and sophisticated film critics. They also become absorbed in the plot so easily, that they applaud and argue during the projections. The entire city mobilizes around the majestic and charming Hotel Nacional. It is the headquarters for the festival, and many people take time off during this event to be able to attend all of the screenings.

The Animated Films

The animation category had very few film entries, but was still a current Latin American production showcase. Participating in competition from Argentina was the short *Tanto Te Gusta Ese Hombre* (*So Much Do You Like That Man*), directed by Vicky Biagiola and Liliana Romero, a color pencil animation, and *Dibu - La Película* (*Dibu - The Movie*), directed by Carlos Olivieri and Alejandro Stoessel, which was the festival's only feature length animation. The film is technically well done, a combination of animation and live-action characters. It tells the story of a couple with four children, three of which are made of flesh and bone, the fourth is animated.

In Cuba, ticket prices are subsidized by the government, and their cost is the equivalent of US $0.35.

Noche (*Night*) directed by Tomás Welss represented Chile in the festival. Using color pencil on paper, it's a very loose and expressive animation, although a little too long. It depicts a night of party, dance and sensuality.

With six films each in competition, Brazil and Cuba had the highest number of animation entries. From Brazil, *Hello Dolly!* and *Kaos*, both directed by Daniel Schorr, are each one minute long. Their themes are about the changes that have taken place during this millennium. In *Recital*, also from Schorr, he uses an interesting original technique. The drawings are done in pencil, shot in black and white, and then color is applied directly to the film.

***Recital* by Daniel Schorr. © Daniel Schorr.**

Technique is also a main concern in Telmo Carvalho's film, *Campo Branco* (*White Field*). The actors are mimes, filmed in live-action, printed on photographic paper, cut-out and later applied onto cels over colorful painted backgrounds. They interact with traditionally animated characters, narrating Northeastern Brazil's struggle with drought. In *Una Casa Muito Engraçada* (*A Very Funny House*), Toshie Nishio, uses a simple technique to illustrate a very well known Brazilian children's song. Finally, *Nino*, directed by Flavia Alfinito, was the only clay animation work in the festival.

From the six Cuban films participating, five are part of the series *Filminutos*, directed by Jorge Valdés and Mario Rivas. This series, now up to 40 episodes, is composed of films that are five minutes long, with various gags from 30 seconds to a minute long, and is a big success in Cuba. On a technical level, the series is done with traditional cel animation. In *En La Tierra De Changó* (*In The Land Of Changó*), director Mario Rivas uses a sophisticated narrative about the Yoruba gods and myths originally from Africa, that are common to Cubans and Brazilians.

Cuba's Animation Industry

The Cuban films are produced by the government agency responsible for all film production on the island, the ICAIC. For more than 20 years the ICAIC has kept it's animation studio active in a cozy three story building, with facilities for animating, lay-out, filming and production. Whatever they lack in resources and technology, Cubans compensate for with improvisation and creativity. In the entire animation studio, I only saw one computer which was used for pencil tests. However, after using an Oxberry camera for the first time, technicians from the ICAIC constructed a second one utilizing parts designed from the first.

The ICAIC has been trying to step into the world animation market, offering it's broad experience in traditional ink and paint.

Films are produced by an enormous crew with a very rigid hierarchy. The amateur starts as an inbetweener. After some time the artist becomes an assistant, then an animator, and finally, after many

The winner of the Coral Negro prize, *Desde Adentro* (*From Inside*) by Dominique Jonard. © Dominique Jonard.

years, a director or an animation supervisor. This factor shows the excellent training done by the studio. Each artist is also a teacher of three or four students under his/her responsibility.

Despite the harsh economic crisis that has been hurting the country, the animation studio has never stopped producing films. In an attempt to move forward with new productions, the ICAIC has been trying to step into the world animation market, offering it's broad experience in traditional ink and paint. So far, part of a Spanish animated series is being developed in the Cuban Animation Studios.

The Grand Winner

Finally, with a certain amount of suspense, the first prize in the animation category, the grand winner of the Coral Negro (Black Coral) prize, was awarded to Desde Adentro (From Inside), directed by Dominique Jonard, who represented Mexico in the competition. The Award demonstrates the social concerns of the festival jury, who valued content over form. Under Jonard's guidance, delinquent children from a Mexican government correctional institution made this film using paper cut-outs to relate their life experiences in the streets, their involvement with drugs, street gang wars, and their abandonment and exclusion from society. The children's ingenuity using the cut-out technique, and the humor originated by their interpretations, created a deep contrast with the violence implicit in the theme. This unexpected paradox gave the film a strong impact, making it unquestionably the winner.

I found the festival in Havana to be not just an attraction, but a reminder that there's another world, made of film, alive, and well on the island of Cuba.

Translated from Portugese by Alejandro Gedeon.

Cesar Coelho is an animator and co-director of the Anima Mundi animation festival in Brazil.

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

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Contato em Havana

de Cesar Coelho

O Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latino-americano é mais uma razão para se visitar Cuba no início de Dezembro. Em sua 19ª edição, o Festival de Havana é o maior evento cinematográfico inteiramente dedicado ao cinema latino, sendo muito prestigiado junto aos produtores, diretores e artistas destes países. Reúne longas, médias e curtas metragens de ficção, documentários, um concurso de cartazes e de roteiros e, at last but not at least, filmes de animação. Além do festival, Cuba, em si, é a outra atração que vale a visita. Não só por suas belezas naturais e arquitetônicas, mas, principalmente, por seu povo e seu modo de vida, baseados em valores bastante diferentes dos nossos.

Um Festival com Público

Durante as duas semanas do festival, os hotéis de Havana ficam lotados e a população da cidade se mobiliza para acompanhar as sessões competitivas e retrospectivas. Em Cuba, o cinema ainda é a grande atração, como era no Brasil nos anos 60, quando os preços eram mais razoáveis, as salas de exibição maiores e mais requintadas e a competição com a televisão não era tão acirrada. Aqui, os preços dos ingresso são subsidiados pelo governo e custam o equivalente a US$0.35, sendo que, com exclusividade para os cubanos, é possível comprar um passe para todas as sessões do festival por cerca de US$0.94.

As salas de cinema de Havana são antigas. Aliás, quando se chega a Havana, a impressão que se tem é a de se ter voltado trinta anos no tempo; as construções são as mesmas dos anos 50 e 60. No trânsito, é enorme a quantidade de veículos com 30, 40 é até 50 anos de idade, incluindo incríveis Chevys 57 super bem conservados. O mesmo se passa com os cinemas que, em sua maioria, ainda são aquelas portentosas salas de espetáculos de 1,000 a 1,500 lugares e tela gigante com cortina que se abre antes da sessão (e eu pensei que nunca mais ia ver isto...). O som é razoável, porém a qualidade de projeção podia ser melhor.

O Programa do Festival Internacional do Novo Cinema Latino-Americano.

A televisão cubana, que é estatal, tem uma programação bastante limitada. Funcionando apenas algumas horas por dia, sua maior atração são as novelas brasileiras que são uma febre entre toda a população e param o país todos os dias na hora dos episódios.

Assim, o cinema é um grande programa e a população comparece em massa, fazendo filas kilométricas nas portas dos cinemas e lotando todas as sessões. Com um nível cultural muito elevado, os cubanos acompanham os filmes com um senso crítico apurado, se envolvendo na trama dos filmes, aplaudindo, discutindo e opinando durante a projeção. Começando no belíssimo Hotel Nacional, sede do festival, toda a cidade se mobiliza em torno do festival e muitos tiram férias nesta época para assistir a todas as obras.

Os Filmes de Animação

Na sessão de animação, embora com pouca quantidade de filmes, foi possível se traçar um painel da atual produção latino-americana. Da Argentina, estavam na competição o curta Tanto te gusta esse hombre / dir: Vicky Biagiola & Liliana Romero, uma animação em lápis de cor sobre papel usando as diferentes texturas destes materiais como recurso narrativo, e Dibu-La película/dir: Carlos Olivieri & Alejandro Stoessel, que era o único longa metragem de animação no festival. Tecnicamente bem feito, com personagens animados contracenando com atores, o filme apresenta um casal que tem quatro filhos: três de carne e osso e o quarto é um cartoon.

Noche/dir: Tomás Welss, representou o Chile no festival.

O charme do velho mundo em Havana é visto nesta foto do Cinema Prayet. Foto de cortesia de e © Cesar Coelho.

Utilizando papel e lápis de cor numa animação bastante solta e expressiva, embora um pouco longa, o filme mostra uma noite de festa, dança e sensualidade.

Recital de Daniel Schorr. © Daniel Schorr

Com seis obras na competição, o Brasil, ao lado de Cuba, também com seis filmes, foi a maior representação no programa de animação. Hello Dolly! e *Kaos*, ambos dirigidos por Daniel Schorr, são filmes curtos de 1 min cada, que têm como tema a mudança do milênio. Também de Daniel, *Recital*, usa uma técnica original: os desenhos foram realizados em papel e lápis, filmados em B&W, e a cor foi aplicada diretamente sobre o negativo pelo autor.

A técnica também é o personagem principal do filme de Telmo Carvalho: Campo Branco. Mímicos, filmados quadro a quadro, copiados em papel fotográfico, recortados e aplicados em acetato, atuam em cenários de pintados e contracenam com personagens animados, para contar a luta do povo do nordeste brasileiro contra a seca. Já em Uma Casa muito engraçada, sua diretora, Toshie Nishio, usa a simplicidade para ilustrar uma música infantil muito conhecida no Brasil. Finalmente, Ninó/dir: Flávia Alfinito que era o único filme realizado em massa de modelar no festival.

Dos seis filmes cubanos, cinco fazem parte da série Filminutos/dir: Jorge Valdés & Mario Rivas. Esta série, já com 40 episódios, é composta de filmes de 5 minutos cada, com várias gags de 30 segundos a um minuto e são um enorme sucesso em Cuba. Diferentemente dos Filminutos que são realizados na tradicional cel-animation, En la tierra de Changó/dir: Mario Rivas, usa várias técnicas numa narrativa sofisticada sobre deuses e mitos de origem africana tão comuns em Cuba quanto no Brasil.

A Industria Cubana de Animação

Todas as obras cubanas são produzidas pelo ICAIC, que é a companhia estatal responsável pela produção cinematográfica. Há mais de vinte anos, o ICAIC mantém ativo o estúdio de animação num agradável prédio de 3 andares com salas de animação, arte-final, filmagem e produção. O que lhes falta em recursos e tecnologia - em todo o estúdio, eu só vi um computador que é usado para pencil-test - os cubanos compensam com improvisação e criatividade: a partir de uma câmera de animação Oxberry, os técnicos do ICAIC construíram uma outra acrescentando mais alguns recursos.

Os filmes são produzidos por uma equipe numerosa cuja a hierarquia é bem rígida: o iniciante, após um período de estágio, começa como in-betweener, após algum tempo, torna-se assistente, depois animador e, assim, leva-se muitos anos até se tornar um diretor ou supervisor de animação. Porém, deve-se ressaltar o bom trabalho de treinamento realizado pelo estúdio, cada artista é também um professor três ou quatro alunos sob sua responsabilidade.

Apesar da grave crise econômica que há anos atinge o país, o estúdio de animação nunca deixou de produzir seus filmes que, como já dissemos, têm excelente repercussão entre o povo. Procurando viabilizar novas produções, o ICAIC vêm buscando prestar serviços em sua especialidade: animação tradicional e pintura de acetato e, atualmente, parte da animação de uma série espanhola é realizada nos estúdios cubanos.

O Grande Vencedor

Por fim, com uma certa dose de suspense, o grande vencedor do Coral Negro: o primeiro prêmio na categoria de animação foi para Desde Adentro/dir: Dominique Jonard, representante do México na competição. A premiação demonstra a preocupação social do festival, valorizando mais o conteúdo

O vencedor do prêmio Coral Negro, *Desde Adentro* de Dominique Jonard. © Dominique Jonard.

que a forma. No filme, menores delinqüentes internos de uma instituição correcional do governo mexicano, contam, usando animação de cut-outs e muita sensibilidade, suas experiências de vida na rua: a convivência com drogas, as guerras de gangues , o abandono e a marginalização. A ingenuidade da técnica e o humor contido na interpretação dos meninos contrastam com a violência implícita no tema, isso só aumenta o impacto causado pelo filme fazendo-o, sem dúvida, merecedor do prêmio.

Agora, sobre a outra atração de Cuba: a sociedade cubana, seu modo de vida, seu lado positivo e seu lado negativo...Isto é assunto para mais alguns artigos e muitas, muitas discussões acaloradas.

Cesar Coelho é animador e co-diretor de Anima Mundi, Festival Internacional de Animação / Brasil.

NATPE 1998:

It's A Tough Market But Someone is Selling…

by Heather Kenyon

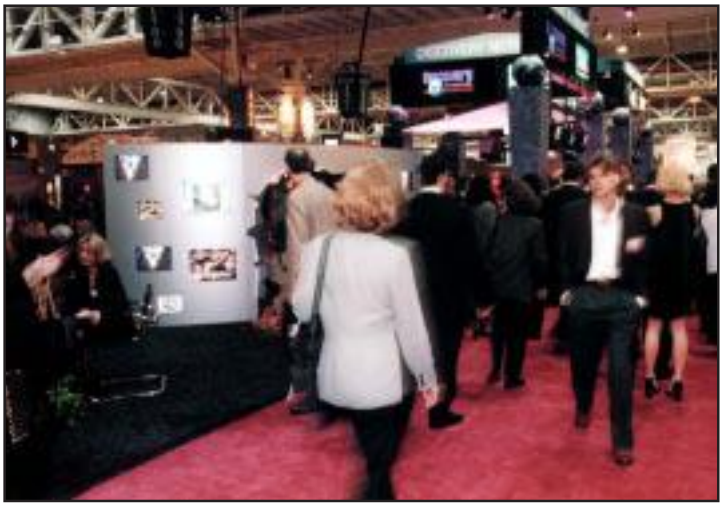


Photo courtesy of NATPE.

For those of us that are most accustomed to animation festivals, NATPE can be something else. In-between the live showroom floor camel rides and armadillo races, crammed in between mega-booths touting the likes of The Nanny, Oprah, and Xena: Warrior Princess , one finds the animated programming. Yes, animation is a big business but at NATPE the niche gets put into perspective.

What was once strictly a domestic television programming market has changed significantly over the years. NATPE has changed to reflect the global nature of today's market. A total of 17,051 attendees descended upon the massive trade show in New Orleans from January 19-22, 1998. Of those attendees, 3,466 were international. Exhibitors were more international than ever, with 300 out of 700 booths occupied by companies from outside the U.S. In fact, NATPE sites that more than 90 countries were represented at this year's market. With vertical integration tightening the U.S. market, both international and U.S. companies without distribution outlets are at NATPE to strike deals and find opportunities for their wares. Whether exhibitors are trying to sell to a major U.S. network, the syndication market or putting together international deals and co-productions, there was a bustle on the floor. Despite the complaints about the U.S. being closed and syndication numbers being down, many companies with innovative programming seem to be finding a place to call home.

"We lead with our media buying. - Shelly Hirsch.

Selling to the Majors

While it is true the small start-up company may not have a chance of seeing their shows on ABC in the near future, some of the major U.S. networks are spreading the wealth between the large animation companies. Kids WB! is currently showing programming that has been produced at Columbia TriStar Television and DreamWorks, SKG. Fox will now be showing two of Gaumont Multimédia's shows, Space Goofs and Oggy and the Cockroaches.

Columbia Tristar Television is a perfect example of a big studio without a network that has made a large impact very quickly. Jumanji and Men in Black were successful shows. Following in this pattern, the upcoming Godzilla looms on the horizon as being just as huge. Sander Schwartz, Executive Vice President and General Manager Children's Programming for the L.A.-based studio, said, "Even though there are more shows being produced overall than ever before, and overall the market is very healthy, the shows are being done by fewer and fewer people." He sites Columbia Tristar's success on many factors including the talent and management at the studio, as well as the fact that when they pitch to networks, they do not have any preconceived baggage that might come with a network affiliation. Currently, Columbia Tristar enjoys the best of many worlds as they are a player with the majors but also

successful in the syndication market. Bohbot Entertainment & Media, Inc. has just acquired Columbia Tristar's Jumanji and was actively selling it at NATPE.

How did Gaumont Multimédia, a European company, hit the pot of gold at the end of the U.S. network rainbow? Marc du Pontavice, President of Gaumont Multimédia, said, "Haim [Saban] knows that what made Fox successful initially is by commissioning various, different programming." However, he does admit that the U.S. market is a tough sell. It took a lot of shopping and significant financing from Europe to get Space Goofs on the U.S. airwaves. Now, moving forward with Space Goofs and Oggy and the Cockroaches, Gaumont's strong European presence helps them. "The fact that we raise a significant amount of the money out of Europe, helps us with the deal making," du Pontavice stated.

"The focus for us [at NATPE] has been solidifying international co-productions deals for the CBS slate." - Toper Taylor.

Another mid-sized independent that is doing very well for itself indeed is NELVANA. "We are going to do approximately 15 series in 1998 and we are going to do 20 series in 1999, so I am frantically looking for properties that we can put into development and then production," said Toper Taylor, President of NELVANA Communications, Inc. He also highlighted a benefit of being independent, "Our objective is to create very high quality, educational programs that fifty years from now kids will be watching on television." Major unattached studios in the U.S. that perhaps CBS might have considered for programming have a completely different agenda, and that is to "largely support the marketing of their major projects."

Starting in fall 1998, Gaumont's *Oggy and the Cockroaches* will join *Space Goofs* on Fox Kids Network. © Gaumont.

The Syndication Market

Syndicators these days are quick to point out that while their ratings may be low, they are still better than most cable network averages and that the A.C. Nielsen Company is riddled with flaws and inadequacies when it comes to measuring children. Still, every "independent" station in the United States, even if they are a member of a start-up network such as UPN or Kids WB!, have a need for programming to fill their afternoons and mornings. Multiply these hours by stations across the country and, of course, the ever-present toy sales and you have yourself a viable business.

As Shelly Hirsch, Chief Executive Officer of The Summit Media Group, flatly states, "As bad as the ratings are in the syndication market, we still make money." He goes onto explain that, "We lead with our media buying. If the programming went away tomorrow, we'd still have a very nice business. We are very secure." Summit is currently syndicating a slate of programming that includes Mr. Men, MGM Productions' Robocop: Alpha Commando and Pokémon. Hirsch was quick to explain that the offending Pokémon scene which caused a number of seizures in Japan in December had been cut.

Bohbot Entertainment & Media, Inc. has launched what they are calling the BKN Network in an attempt to capitalize on the shrinking number of players in the syndication field. George Baratta, President, BKN Kids Network

***Mummies Alive!* is one of the shows included in Bohbot's two-hour program block, "the BKN Network." © 1997 DIC Productions & Northern Lights Entertainment, Inc.**

explained, "The field of play for independent producers is seriously dwindling. Saban has dropped out of the broadcast syndication arena, Claster has reduced its offering to focus strictly on Hasbro Toys and UPN has given back one hour of programming to its affiliates." BKN has recently acquired DIC's Mummies Alive!, Pocket Dragon Adventures, Sonic Underground and as stated earlier, Columbia Tristar's Jumanji. Denise Feeney, BKN's Affiliate Relations Manager, said that at NATPE, "Our sales staff is really trying to sell our programming as blocks."

Sally Bell, President of Claster Television, announced that they will strip their highly successful Beast Wars this Fall and is also looking forward to premiering MGM Productions' new domestic comedy, The Lionhearts, which is based on MGM's mascot, Leo the Lion.

Sachs Family Entertainment was in New Orleans with Zorro and, of course, the trusty Bananas in Pajamas which according to President Barbara Schweke, "has a life of its own. Everyone loves them and are aware of them." As a result, they are bringing the program back to the stations in September on a weekly basis for its fourth season. Sachs is also syndicating Monkey Magic, a new fantasy/adventure series of both 2-D and 3-D computer animation produced by B-Factory Co., Ltd., in association with Enoki Films USA, Inc. "It is a classic in the Asian market," stated Schweke.

GoodTimes Entertainment's *Animated Classics* series will air on Cartoon Network via satellite in Latin America. © GoodTimes Entertainment.

International Deals & Co-Productions

Many companies use NATPE, not so much to sell to the U.S. market, but to sell into other international markets and finalize international co-production deals.

Claude Berthier, CEO of Marina Productions, was at NATPE promoting among other shows, his new The Fabulous Adventures of Jacques Cousteau. While the series of 26 x 26 is co-produced by France 3, he is seeking television co-production partners and toy licensees. The series is based on the real Jacques Cousteau and his adventures. Berthier was in the military with Cousteau from 1958-1959 and became very good friends with him. When Cousteau passed away last year, his wife, Francine, agreed to

let Berthier produce the cartoon. Teaching ecology lessons in each episode, the show generated quite a lot of interest from European countries all the way to Japan.

Toper Taylor stressed that, "The focus for us [at NATPE] has been solidifying international co-productions deals for the CBS slate. We are very pleased by the reception we are receiving. People are excited about the fact that an international company has partnered with an American broadcaster to create something that is dynamic and fresh. We are finding that foreign countries are excited about coming in and being partners with us and CBS. We have also received a surprising amount of support from U.S. independents and other independents."

An interesting trend that was noticed was the amount of American companies sans networks that were at NATPE to do deals with European and Japanese production companies. One U.S. production executive told me, "Maybe we'll get a hit [in Europe] and be able to leverage that back into the American television market."

The hot spot this year seemed to be Latin America. Barcelona-based, Cromosoma TV Produccions was there to do business with many Latin American companies and that they did do, making several deals which have yet to be officially confirmed. Pablo Chamorro of Madrid, Spain's B.R.B. Internacional, S.A., stated that while the U.S. and international companies were important, "We are here predominately to do business with Latin America." B.R.B. was at NATPE offering a number of properties including their very successful *Gnomes* movies, specials and series. Moreover, even Gaumont's du Pontavice mentioned the importance of meeting Latin America "half-way" in the U.S. in order to do business.

One insider told me, "The dollars buy the time slots. I know you don't want to hear that, but that's the truth."

Other Latin American news included Cartoon Network partnering with GoodTimes Entertainment to show 39-hours of animated programming via satellite to Latin America. Called *Animated Classics*, the collection includes classic fairy tales and literary works. GoodTimes also signed a deal with Mexico's Tycoon Entertainment, a major Latin American licensing agency, for video distribution within Mexico. Tycoon will release 50 GoodTimes titles over the next three years. NATPE '98 was GoodTimes' first. Also the Jim Henson Company has entrusted over 200 hours of original programming to Salsa Distribution, a Paris-based leading Latin American distributor.

The Overall

While no one sat and cried the blues about business being bad, a lot of producers admitted that their slice of the profit pie is getting smaller and smaller. Competition between viewing outlets, sports, computers, VCR's, electronic games and the general activities of just being a kid, are splitting audiences left and right.

The speculation is that such competition for numbers will bolster innovative independents and quality programming. However, even in the face of NELVANA's success, the average person is not forecasting these revelations. Sander Schwartz made a good point though. "The changes [in the business] have been so dramatic and drastic over the last two to four years that I don't think it is a settled business. I think it is an evolving situation," he said.

One independent company that is making a bid for the big time is Seattle, Washington-based Headbone Interactive. Starting in the CD-ROM world, the company has just launched a new in-house animation studio, Headbone Television. They are also continuing to log record breaking hits on their web site the Headbone Zone. The young and vibrant company currently has six projects in development and plans to support and augment their shows through the web site.

As far as syndication goes... one insider told me, "The dollars buy the time slots. I know you don't want to hear that, but that's the truth."

Still, Summit's Shelly Hirsch remains determined, "All you need is one program. If you catch lightning in a bottle once, you can become extremely comfortable."

And indeed, a lot of folks out there are trying to make just that happen.

Heather Kenyon is Editor-in-Chief of Animation World Magazine.

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Highlights of the Second Annual World Animation Celebration

by Joy Kennelly

WAC © 1998

This year's World Animation Celebration (WAC), in association with Animation Magazine and Variety, takes place at the Pasadena Civic Center for a command sequel. It's a festival, a trade show, a conference, a job fair, a student animation marathon, an Internet pow wow and networking haven all rolled into one.

Featuring tributes to artists such as Ray Harryhausen, Bill Plympton, Corky Quakenbush, Bill Hanna and Joe Barbara, and to studios and independents such as Warner Bros., Dreamworks SKG and Cuppa Coffee, there's something for everyone to watch. "The film competition is the core of the festival where we celebrate the art of animation. What's most important to recognize this year is the bridge taking place between live-action and animation," said Festival Director Leslie Sullivan.

As a result, the World Summit for Feature Films and Visual Effects was launched to introduce the changing landscape for animated features and the opportunities available to filmmakers. The second component of the Summit will examine how digital technology and visual effects are changing the way Hollywood makes movies. According to Director Danielle Robertson, "This event is structured to give the leaders of the industry the opportunity to share points of view in open discussions, screen clips illustrating the topics covered and provide a sneak preview of what to expect in the immediate future."

The film competition is the core of the festival where we celebrate the art of animation. - Festival Director Leslie Sullivan

View our web-site (www.wacfest.com) for all the latest information which we up-date daily. For a day by day breakdown, read on.

Monday, February 16, 1998

Students won't want to miss the President's Day World Animation Marathon (WAM) kick off event. High schools and colleges from around the country are gathering to create a feature length animated film with the guidance of AnimAction, Inc. (www.animaction.com). Ringling School of Art and Design, School of Visual Arts, Sheridan College, DHIMA, Gnomon, Art Institutes International and the Vancouver Film School will be recruiting as well. Awards will be given at the end of the week during the WAM awards ceremony.

Ray Harryhausen will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award for his pioneering stop-motion work. © Ray Harryhausen.

Concurrently the same day, web-a-holics will enjoy the Big Internet Animation Pow-Wow put on by Animation World Network (AWN) and Unbound Media. Director Andrea Drougas has put together panels with such heavyweights as Sony Pictures Imageworks, Digital Planet, Warner Bros., Real Networks and more. Some of the topics to be discussed include, "The Future of Animation On the Internet," "New Technologies to Power your Studio into the New Millennium" and "Producing Content for the Internet." If you register on-line you can receive a discount.

Tuesday, February 17, 1998

Beginning today, check out the competitive screenings, independent showcases and artist tributes, with Ray Harryhausen, John Coates and Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera receiving Lifetime Achievement Awards. Don't miss the Anime "Festival Within the Festival" featuring a Speed Racer tribute. Screenings occur at various times all week long. Some highlights include the ever-so-evolved South

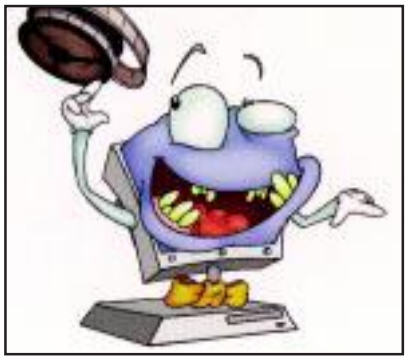
Park characters in "Big Al's Gay Boat Ride," Corky Quakenbush's repertoire of twisted take-offs, some of Cartoon Network's never before seen *Dexter's Laboratory* shorts as well as John K.'s new short, *Ranger Smith*. The schedule will be posted on the web site by Saturday, February 7, 1998.

A list of all the numerous lectures and seminars offered can be read on the WACfest website...

Tuesday is also the first day of the World Summit for Feature Films and Visual Effects. This is a defining year for feature animation. Nicktoons President, Albie Hecht, Warner Bros. Feature Animation President, Max Howard and other heavy hitters will speak on such topics as "How Do the Major Studios Achieve Success in the Theatrical Marketplace?", "A Match Made in Heaven: Exploring the Role of Digital Technology as a Tool for Traditional Animators," and "3D Animation: Is it the Animation Medium that will Dominate the Next Millennium?" Listen and learn about the future of animation in feature films.

Miller Freeman's New Animation Technology Expo and Conference runs through Friday and explores key computer animation issues and showcases the newest hardware and software. For more information, look up www.etshows.com or call 1 800 789 2223.

WAC will present screenings of Bill Plympton's work. Photo courtesy of and © Bill Plympton



New Animation Technology Expo and Conference's mascot. © Miller Freeman.

Wednesday, February 18, 1998

The World Summit for Feature Films and Visual Effects continues.

A Special Speed Racer tribute will be hosted by Cartoon Network's Vice-President of Original Animation Linda Simensky with Author Elizabeth Moran. This anime presentation includes old and new episodes of Speed Racer, last year's popular Dexter's Laboratory "Mock 5," and the recent George Clooney Saturday Night Live spoof. Enter the Speed Racer trivia contest to win a Speed Racer leather/twill jacket or die-cast (Hot Wheels) collectors cars.

Thursday, February 19, 1998

For those of you interested in the "business aspect of animation," The International Business Conference for Television Animation returns this year. Director Andrew Bolt said, "If you are in the business of creating, developing or distributing television animation, this is a conference not to be missed." Taking place at the Doubletree Hotel Thursday, February 19 and Friday, February 20, 1998, the IBCTA boasts such panels and speakers as, "Why is Animation Suddenly Working in Prime Time?" and "What's the Financial Future for Animation Production?" Inquiring minds want to know. Experts want to tell. Listen to HBO Animation Sr. Vice-President Carmi Zlotnick, the new Film Roman President & CEO, David Pritchard and other top executives discuss these and other issues. This was a sold-out event last year and promises a repeat performance this year.

Friday, February 20, 1998

Friday marks the beginning of the ASIFA -Hollywood Opportunities Expo and the end of the IBCTA. If you want a job in animation, to learn more about what it takes to make it in animation, or just to hang out with your peers, visit this Expo. A list of all the numerous lectures and seminars offered can be read on the WACfest web-site or on the ASIFA -Hollywood web-site, which is located at http://home.earthlink.net/~asifa. Please note, all schedules are subject to change.

Come dressed in your favorite animated character costume or create a costume of day glo.

Saturday, February 21, 1998

The final day of the World Animation Celebration is where all good things must come to an end. Learn the results of the week-long screening competitions at the awards ceremony and party on at the Closing Night Gala with another Day Glo Extravaganza. Only this year, it's also a costume ball. Come dressed in your favorite animated character costume or create a costume of day glo. The choice is up to you. Just come.

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

His Mother's Voice: Dennis Tupicoff's New Documentary

film review by Emru Townsend

What can a mother say when her son is violently taken away from her? Dennis Tupicoff's latest endeavor, His Mother's Voice, answers the question - twice.

Matthew Easdale was shot dead in a house in Brisbane, Australia in April 1995. His mother, Kathy Easdale, was interviewed for ABC (Australian Broadcasting Association) Radio a few weeks later. That broadcast provides the voice track for His Mother's Voice, a film in which Tupicoff explores how such an earth-shattering event can resonate with an audience.

***His Mother's Voice* © Dennis Tupicoff.**

Feeling the Loss

For all the horror and strife in the world today, it's safe to say that most mothers will not have to experience the sudden, brutal loss of a child. Fortunately, it's difficult for many of us to relate to or even imagine the feeling of losing our own flesh and blood.

Of course, the whole point of a narrative is to involve the audience, to the point where they empathize with at least one person on the screen. If Lost World can make us feel even a little bit linked to a leather-jacketed mathematician running away from cloned dinosaurs, then surely something with its roots in reality can move us. Using a curious blend of realism and stylization, Tupicoff does the job - but not in a way we expect.

As the camera closes in on a live-action radio, the interviewer asks one question, 'What happened on the night of the murder?' Mrs. Easdale begins narrating the night's events, and the scene is quickly transformed into a dark but colorful rotoscoped reminiscence, with thick lines and a flat color scheme reminiscent of Tupicoff's Darra Dogs. We watch a re-enactment of the evening unfold, as Mrs. Easdale hears the news that something has happened, drives to the house, and

A brother's anguish in *His Mother's Voice*. © Dennis Tupicoff.

A rotoscoped Mrs. Easdale in the second half of *His Mother's Voice*. © Dennis Tupicoff.

discovers her son was shot. The camera alternates between following her and giving us her point of view as she waits outside while the paramedics try to save Matthew. Eventually, she gets the news: her son has died. Mrs. Easdale's monologue ends with the recounting of Matthew's brother's reaction to the news.

As the camera closes in on a live-action radio, the interviewer asks one question, 'What happened on the night of the murder?'

Take Two

Then it starts all over again.

Well, not exactly. The dialogue starts over and there's rotoscoped footage. Only this time, the footage is of the interview taking place at Mrs. Easdale's home, and the medium is rougher, like pencil on paper. The camera only spends a brief time in the house before wandering outside, observing the quiet suburb, and eventually returning indoors to close in on Mrs. Easdale's face as she recounts her surviving son's reaction.

His Mother's Voice raises some interesting questions about documentaries in general, and animated documentaries in particular. Students of media literacy have long recognized that documentaries are not the objective recordings of events that many people assume they are. Choosing a soundtrack, editing the film, and even the act of deciding what to record and what to ignore are all filtered through the subjective viewpoints of the director, writer, and editor. (Remember that the next time you watch *Truth or Dare*.)

Tupicoff acknowledges this when he says, "By presenting just two of the many possible points of view that might accompany the voice of Mrs. Kathy Easdale, I hope the film leaves the audience to imagine others, and to ponder its own response to her pain." The film itself tells the audience that what we see is not an absolute; the same events, narrated by the same person, can be observed, interpreted, and experienced in many different ways.

The Technique

The mind game is aided by the use of rotoscoping, which fuzzes the line between reality and craft. The viewer's mind jumps between viewpoints. This is a real radio broadcast, but it's animated. The animation is based on live footage, but the footage is really a dramatization of events. Is this real or is it unreal?

Ultimately, it doesn't matter. After the mild garishness of the first segment, the more subdued second half, with its drifting camera, softly hits you with the power of the experience. Hearing it for the second time, the tiny details in the audio - Mrs. Easdale's gradual loss of composure, for instance - are more apparent. Of course, we've just seen and heard the story from a first-person perspective, and now we're hearing it again... only the camera doesn't seem to care as it observes the world outside the house, lingering on a dog who is oblivious to the tragedy being related within.

Strangely enough, it's by watching the dog that the full impact of Mrs. Easdale's loss becomes clear. *His Mother's Voice* © Dennis Tupicoff.

Strangely enough, it's by watching the dog that the full impact of Mrs. Easdale's loss becomes clear. She's alone in her grief. The other son has lost his brother, but he won't feel the loss the same way as his mother. The rest of the world just keeps on going about its business.

***His Mother's Voice* raises some interesting questions about documentaries in general, and animated documentaries in particular.**

Manipulation

Would reversing the order of the two segments have changed this feeling? What if, as Tupicoff suggests, there were other points of view presented? Would we feel more sorrow, or less?

Think about it. The suggestion that we might feel *less* sorrow as a woman recounts her most terrible loss. Whether we feel more or less pain all depends on the director's whims. Isn't that a little disturbing?

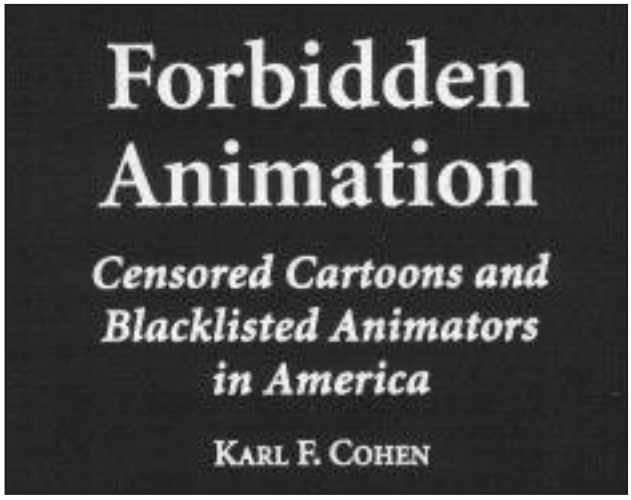
Yes, it is, and that's just the sort of disturbing feeling that makes for a powerful and thought-provoking film.

Emru Townsend is a freelance writer who won't stop talking about cinema, animation and computers. He is also the founder and former editor of FPS, *a magazine about animation.*

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Forbidden Animation: A Valuable Contribution

book review by Mark Langer



To those of us of a certain age, the recent jeremiads issued by the Southern Baptist Convention against the Disney Company for it's alleged anti-Christian and pro-gay policies are nothing less than incredible. To this writer, the Magic Kingdom had always been the paradigm of family entertainment. On the bulletin board that hangs over my desk, I have a copy of the infamous drawing of an orgy featuring Disney characters that appeared in Paul Kastner's The Realist in the late 1960s. It's value in my eyes had always resided in the outrageousness of showing Mickey shooting up while Goofy and Minnie fornicate. Next to them, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs indulge in sexual acts for which no specific descriptive terms have yet been invented. The cultural contradiction implicit in having characters embedded in Disney wholesomeness acting like members of the Manson family on an outing with Kesey's Merry Pranksters has made this image a classic of '60s counterculture.

Conservative elements today would see this not as parody, but as an indication of the moral squalor of the contemporary animation industry. Amazing numbers of the radical right apparently spend hours and days freeze-framing images from animated tapes and laser discs, searching for glimpses of spicy stuff. Michael Eisner and his minions from hell have been savaged by guardians of morality with the ferocity of a Chihuahua attacking a meatball. Meanwhile, others in the animation industry, from Beavis and Butt-head's Mike Judge to Pink Komkommer's Marv Newland, who might interpret this parody as a signpost for one of the directions to be taken by contemporary animators, have escaped relatively unaffected by controversy.

Catstello answers, "If the Hays Office would only let me, I'd give him the bird all right!"

A Catalogue of Censorship

Those who call for a fatwah against the Great Satan of Burbank would be well advised to read Karl Cohen's Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators in America. Cohen, an art historian and President of ASIFA-San Francisco, as well as editor of the ASIFA-San Francisco Newsletter, has spent several years researching these topics, motivated, in part, by the loss of family members' jobs forty years ago due to the FBI informing their employers that they had "questionable backgrounds." Therefore, it is not a surprise to find that Karl Cohen is a passionate advocate of free speech and open expression on both political and other subjects. It is this sentiment that holds together a book of wide-ranging topics.

Cohen separates his subject into five categories: censorship of theatrical animation, stereotypes in animation, uncensored animation, censoring animation on television, and blacklisted animators. In his chapter on censorship of theatrical animation, Cohen gives a chronological overview of censorship, focusing mostly on America, with glimpses of the situation in Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom. There is considerable entertainment value in the author's cataloguing of no-nos such as the nude pinups in Daffy the Commando(1943) and He Was Her Man(1937) that somehow managed to evade the censor's shears. More interestingly, Cohen examines standards of censorship in different jurisdictions, from the Production Code administered under Will Hays' Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, to the British Board of Censors. Cohen gives examples of

the activities of various boards and points out the limits and contradictions in censorship systems. The author concludes that the censorship conducted for 34 years under Hays' office at best "protected Americans from seeing a few cow udders and a few drunken animals, or hearing a few rude noises." At it's worst, it may have tamed the most extreme excesses of Tex Avery and Bob Clampett. The Production Code itself became a source of humor in American animation. Cohen recalls such gags as the one in Clampett's A Tale of Two Kitties(1942) in which the cats Babbit and Catstello try to catch Tweety Bird. At one point Babbit says to his partner "Give me the bird, give me the bird!" Catstello answers, "If the Hays Office would only let me, I'd give him the bird all right!"

The Image of Racism

Cohen's chapter on racist images in animation is primarily devoted to the depiction of people of color. "When and why did animators stop making these films?" Cohen investigates both the actions of African-American publications and organizations such as the NAACP in making their displeasure with stereotypes in American animation known. The greater part of Cohen's investigation centers around the production and reception of Disney's Song of the South(1947). Based on Production Code Administration files, interviews with screenwriter Maurice Rapf and contemporary press reports, Cohen illustrates how Disney attempted to respond to pressure to modify his use of stereotypes in the film. Disney hired Rapf, a Jew and known Communist, to rewrite the script in the hope that Rapf's background qualified the screenwriter to avoid problems related to racism. Disagreements with Dalton Reymond, author of the original Uncle Remus treatment, led to Rapf's reassignment and several of the racist clichés were restored. Even if the film had been made according to his version, Rapf now feels that Song of the South was inherently racist, and should not have been made.

***Song of the South* created a storm of protest upon it's release, but it's box-office success left Disney crying all the way to the bank.**

Rapf was preceded in this view by Walter White of the NAACP and June Blythe, director of the American Council on Race Relations, both of whom requested to see a treatment of the film when production was first announced. Actor Clarence Muse, one-time advisor to Disney on the portrayal of African-Americans in films, left the studio and campaigned actively against the production of the movie. The Production Code Administration contacted Disney repeatedly with suggestions to modify the script, and to "take counsel with some responsible Negro authorities concerning the overall acceptability...of this story." Some of the warnings were heeded. Most were not. Song of the South created a storm of protest upon it's release, but it's box-office success left Disney crying all the way to the bank.

Animation in the Buff

Cohen's chapter on uncensored animation examines the independent production of animated films produced without formal censorship. Here Cohen looks at more informal kinds of repression, such as the threat of lawsuits, distributors shelving films after public outrage

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at previews, cuts to films in order to avoid "X" ratings, etc. In one extreme example, footage of an experimental film made by Ben Van Meeder was sent by the film lab to the FBI because of concerns that the film was pornographic. I was particularly interested to read Cohen's multiple accounts of Ralph Bakshi's notorious screening of Coonskin(1974) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As a member of the audience, my memories of the event offer yet another version of what has become the Rashomon of animation evenings — no two accounts of what happened at that screening agree with each other. Regardless, Paramount executives were so disturbed by the near-riot at MoMA that the film was suppressed for years. A section of the chapter also deals with naughty bits inserted into animated films as gags by bored animators or people in the ink and paint department. Such jokes as Baby Herman committing an act too lewd to be recounted to readers of Animation World Magazine in Who Framed Roger Rabbit(1988) are gradually being eliminated from animated films as single-frame scrutiny on laser discs has evoked protests from those who enjoy making an issue out of such things.

Creators of *The Smurfs* had to avoid any association of their characters with magic in order to avoid allegations that the show promoted Satanism.

Broadcast Standards and Practices

Perhaps my favorite part of the book is Cohen's chapter on television, in which the reader is introduced to the arcane world of Broadcast Standards and Practices. Cohen's list of censorship standards used in the production of television animation is hilarious. Creators of The Smurfs had to avoid any association of their characters with magic in order to avoid allegations that the show promoted Satanism. Cohen's quotes from BS&P memos discussing "tastefulness" in regards to the depiction of snot ("we expect this to look clear and shiny rather than thick, green and disgusting") reveal the more surreal aspects of censorship.

Cohen later asks, will freedom of expression be exercised mainly by those who can afford to make films supporting their points of view?

The Blacklist

Cohen's final chapter on blacklisted animators brings the book to a fairly grim conclusion. Although the author acknowledges that there is no way of knowing how many people lived in fear of being named by some informant, he does draw on oral histories and HUAC transcripts to detail the persecution of people for their political beliefs. Cohen rightly depicts the persecution of the 1950s as stemming in part from roots in the industry's labor action in the 1930s and 1940s.

Although opposed to repression, Cohen is aware of the problems that may result with unfettered expression — seen earlier in his sympathetic approach to those objecting to Song of the South. Cohen later asks, will freedom of expression be exercised mainly by those who can afford to make films supporting their points of view? Will the financial risks involved in film production result only in films that are acceptable to the widest possible audience? These are questions worth further study.

Cohen's approach to the material is that of an empiricist. He appears either uninterested or unaware of theoretical literature that relates to censorship or systems of repression. Although Cohen usually works from the films themselves and from such primary documentation as oral histories, the Hays Office files, U.S. Congressional Committee hearings transcripts, he sometimes includes anecdotal material gained in conversations with researchers and enthusiasts as if it were fact. There are occasional minor inaccuracies, such as the dates of the establishment of British censorship categories, and far too many spelling errors, such as "dignified rolls" instead of "dignified roles." But these are minor complaints about a valuable contribution to the literature on animation, and a volume that will doubtlessly be gracing many of our bookshelves.

Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators in America, by Karl F. Cohen, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1997. 230 pages, illustrated. ISBN: 0-7864-0395-0.
To order this book, call (in the U.S.) 800-253-2187

Mark Langer teaches film at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. He is a frequent contributor to scholarly journals and a programmer of animation retrospectives.

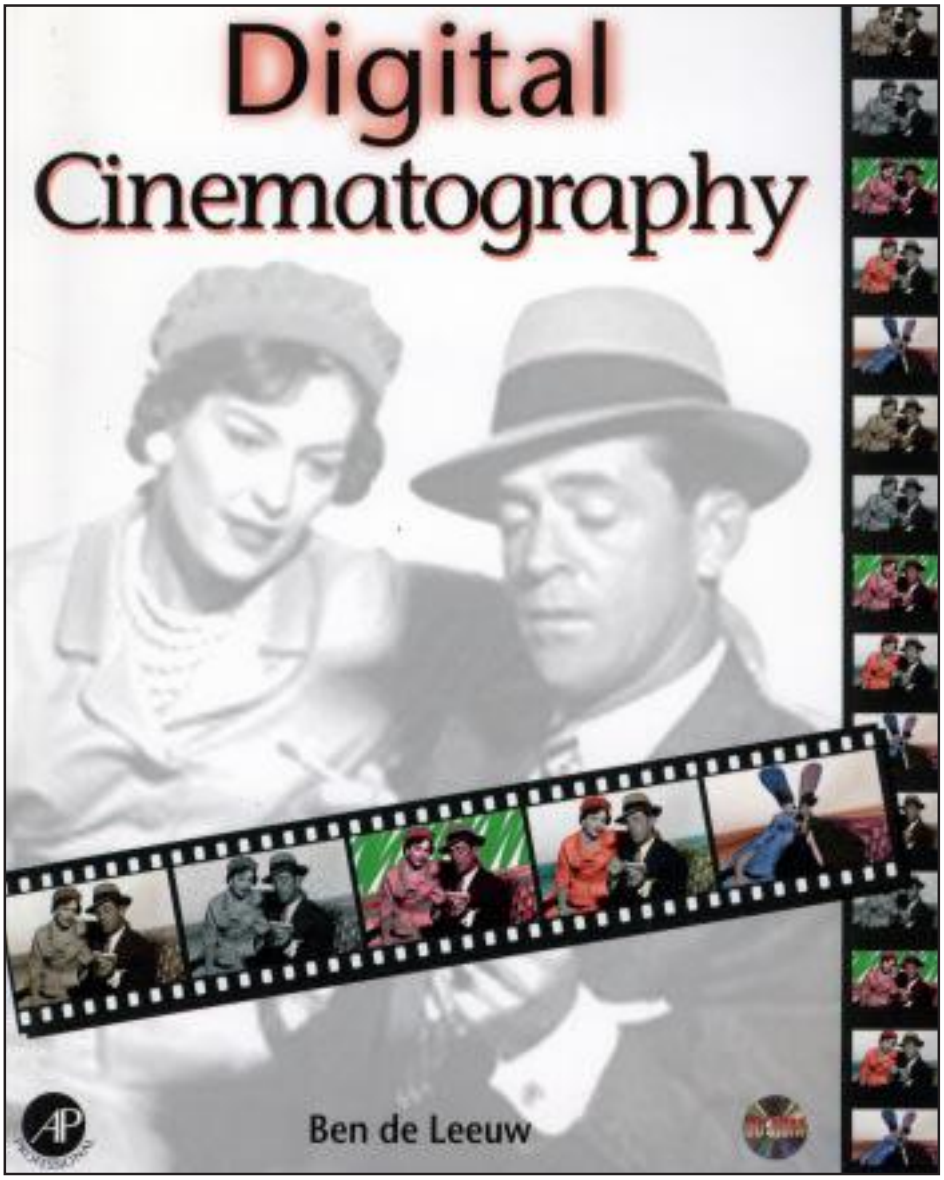
Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Digital Cinematography: A Good Place to Start

by Bill Fleming

What is digital cinematography? Well, it's the art of storytelling on the computer. In today's terms it typically means 3-D animation as described in Ben de Leeuw's Digital Cinematography. I'm pleased finally to see a book that covers this crucial topic. You'll find that my review is rather direct and critical since I like to see 3-D books that go beyond superficial explanation and actually explore the deep roots of 3-D animation. Of course, I'm usually disappointed, but in the case of Digital Cinematography I was pleasantly surprised. With the exception of the occasional light coverage on topics, I found the book to be a very informative resource.

To keep this review from becoming a book itself, I decided to provide you with a 'First Impression' overview and then cover the most notable chapters in the book. While every chapter provided useful information, there were several that were especially valuable to digital cinematographers. So, what are we waiting for? Let's take a look at Digital Cinematography.



First Impression

My first impression of the book was one of disappointment, not due to the content, but rather the visuals. To be specific, the example images were less than motivational. This is a problem with nearly every 3-D book. It seems most authors focus their energy on the text, but treat the images as an afterthought. In a world of imagery such as 3-D graphics, it's difficult to take their discussions to heart when the images are disappointing. If we are to be convinced that the information they are sharing is accurate and useful we need to see practical, real-world examples that support their claims. In the case of the images in Digital Cinematography, well, I don't think anyone will ever have the need to render a stickman worshipping a temple that looks like a teapot. At least, I certainly hope they won't. The images in the book are

barren and very unrealistic which tends to make light of the subject matter. It's my sincere hope that 3-D authors will soon realize the importance of providing visually appealing and inspirational images, which will make their information more credible. As viewers, we tend to assume that the author is utilizing the information and techniques described in the book to create the images. Therefore, if the images are poor, we must assume the information is also poor. This may not always be the case, but we will never know since we didn't read the book due to the poor quality of the images!

Of course, I'm usually disappointed, but in the case of *Digital Cinematography* I was pleasantly surprised.

Okay, now that I have that off my chest, let's take a look at the content of the book. While the book does make several good points, it also appears to be one-sided. For example, it states that having characters recognize the camera's presence by looking at it is undesirable, but there are many cases where having the characters look at the camera is a powerful tool in drawing the viewer into the story. For instance, the movie Cuffs where Christian Slater talks to the viewer directly helps to pull the viewer in. It would have been nice for the book to share more than one view on the topic.

You'll also find that the book seems to focus on more classic cinematography rather than modern techniques. If you are interested in the classic methods it's a nice book, but if you lean towards the modern techniques you'll find yourself wanting more. However, this doesn't mean that the book isn't valuable. I just prefer to see a book that covers all possibilities, rather than the author's personal taste, even if it happens to be good taste as is the case with Digital Cinematography. Now, here's a couple of the most useful chapters.

Chapter1: *Digital Cinematography*

This chapter had a fairly good overview of film language and work principles though I felt myself wanting more. It seems that several ideas are touched upon lightly, peaking our interest, but never satisfying it with further elaboration. For example: When using movies as a reference source, it suggests that you watch the movie several times to grasp the film's approach. This makes sense because you typically get caught up in the story the first couple of times you view the movie, but you actually need to view the movie on videotape to be critical. The 'theater experience' is too captivating with the big screen and THX Sound. It's almost impossible to be objective, particularly if you enjoy the film. You need to critique the film's approach in an environment that gives you control, such as on video. It's more difficult to be pulled into the story on a small television screen without the thunderous theater sound and giant picture. Besides, you can pause the movie for those all important bathroom and snack breaks.

Chapter 2: Introduction to Lighting

Here you'll find an excellent overview of the different light types and uses. To my knowledge this is the only 3-D book that has actually related 3-D lighting to its real-world counterparts, which was a refreshing change. You'll also find some very useful tips in this chapter. A particularly good tip was to identify the influence of individual lights by turning off all the other lights in the scene and creating a test render to see the influence of the light. Another great tip was the use of a backlight to make the character stand out from the background, which is something cinematographers and photographers have been doing for years, but 3-D artists rarely do.

It's my sincere hope that 3-D authors will soon realize the importance of providing visually appealing and inspirational images, which will make their information more credible.

While there was a great deal of good information in the chapter, I did notice the absence of a discussion on specularity. The chapter failed to mention that specularity must be disabled on the fill and backlights to prevent multiple 'hot spots' from appearing on the objects in the scene. Since fill and backlights are used to simulate radiosity, they are considered indirect lighting. Since specularity is only created by direct lights, you'll want to disable specularity on your fill and backlights. If your indirect lights are creating specularity, your scene will appear very artificial. In film production and professional photography, reflectors are used to bounce the light from the fill and backlights to diffuse the specularity. Naturally, some 3-D programs don't allow you to control the specularity values of the lights. In these cases, you'll need to use several lights with very low brightness values to simulate the effect of a singular fill or back light. Using lights with low brightness values will diffuse the specularity and by using multiple lights you'll be able to achieve the desired brightness.

Chapter 5: Motion

I must admit I was very impressed by the attention to detail in this chapter. I found it to be very insightful with some excellent real-world references, which helped drive the concept home. If you are interested in perfecting your camera movement this chapter is a must. While the visuals were less than stimulating, the content was excellent. The most important tip in the chapter is that you need to conform to the viewer's expectations when adding camera movements to your animations. I can't tell you how refreshing it is for someone to point out this critical fact. Nothing will undermine your animation like improper camera movement.

Chapter 6: Working with Characters

I was pleased to see a chapter dedicated to character lighting since most 3-D animations do a very poor job of lighting characters, which then undermines the impact of the animation. I can't count the number of times I've seen characters that were poorly lit or had no dedicated lighting at all. This causes the character to blend in with the background, which neutralizes their impact in the scene.

While the chapter content was informative, I was annoyed at the superficial discussion of the specific light types. For example, the coverage of the use of eye lighting was great, but there was no explanation on how to properly stage the lighting. It mentions that you need to keep the light from being noticeable but then offers no explanation on how to do it. When I purchase a 3-D book I'm hoping it will show me how to save time by showing solutions to problems. While introducing the technique is paramount, it is only half of the equation. I need to be shown how to apply the techniques so I don't waste a lot of time experimenting. For example, it would have been good to point out that the character lights should have the shadow and specularity attributes disabled. Otherwise, the character will have lighting that conflicts with the scene's lighting.

I just prefer to see a book that covers all possibilities, rather than the author's personal taste, even if it happens to be good taste as is the case with *Digital Cinematography.*

Chapter 7: Exterior Lighting

This discussion on lighting was relatively detailed. It was nice to see the different lighting scenarios such as daylight, nighttime and water lighting discussed individually. I did find that the detail of the discussion was rather superficial, again leaving me wanting more. To be exact, the discussion on nighttime lighting failed to identify the fact that moonlight is heavily diffused. Since it is actually light reflected from the sun, it naturally will be diffused. It's basically a large indirect light source. I also noticed that the discussion on outer space lighting was correct in its assumptions that the light is predominantly direct from the sun, but it failed to address the indirect light that comes from planetary bodies, such as planets and asteroids. If you are rendering a satellite orbiting earth, you need to backlight the satellite to account for the light that is reflected off the earth. The same would apply if the moon was in the scene.

The discussion on water light was very well done. I particularly liked the segment that addressed light that bounces off the surface of the water, and described how it illu-

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minates the environment with organic light patterns caused by the light reflecting off the ripples in the water. I've seen many under-water images that incorporate this effect, but I have rarely seen it used on surface images.

In general I'd say it was a very well presented chapter, missing only a few important details.

Chapter 9: Color

I was pleased to discover a discussion on the color of natural light at different times of the day, but I was greatly disturbed to see that the light colors mentioned were inaccurate. It states that high noon light is white or yellow, when it is actually blue and that firelight is yellow and orange when it's actually red. The color of light is determined by its temperature, which is measured in degrees Kelvin. Basically, cool lights, like candles, are red, and warm lights, like sunlight, are blue. Photographers are very familiar with the color of light since they need to use special filters like polarizers to remove the natural blue color of daylight.

Now, we don't see the actual color of light because our eyes automatically convert the light to white through a process known as chromatic adaptation. This process isn't perfect, so some light coloration will be visible but it's actually only around 5%. The result is that objects will take on a different color tint at different times of the day. Try this test. Step outside at noon and take a look at hills or mountains in the distance. You'll notice that they have a bluish tint. It's much easier to see the impact of light colors the further objects are away. You should definitely do a little exploration on your own to discover the actual colors of light.

I also noticed an omission from the chapter, which was a discussion on the color of indirect lights. You see, light is emitted from the source at a particular color, but when it bounces off objects it takes on the color of that object. For example: An incandescent light in a house lamp leaves the bulb pinkish orange but is changed to beige when it bounces off the off-white walls of the room. A discussion dedicated to the properties of indirect lighting would have made the chapter more complete.

In general, I'd say the chapter was very useful but had a few mistakes in the colors of light and definitely could have explored the issues of light color in more detail.

I would definitely recommend *Digital Cinematography* to any 3-D animator who is interested in creating quality computer animations.

Wrap Up

Well, I'm sure it seems that I have hammered the book but that's only because I want to see the quality of 3-D books improve. I figure if I'm to invest my hard-earned money on a book, I'd like to get the biggest bang for my buck. While the book was light on exploration and had some errors, it was generally full of valuable information. Since I like to quantify things I've rated the book based on specific areas which are listed below. Each area is rated in a value from 1-10, with ten being highest, then I've provided an overall score. This rating will make it easier for you to determine the value of each area.

How it Rates

First Impression: 5
The images were less than compelling and the examples seemed simplistic.

Content: 7
There was an abundance of valuable information but I was left wanting more. There were also a few errors in the information provided.

Image Quality: 3
Well, the images could have used a lot of work.

Presentation: 8
It was pleasant to read and it kept me interested. The information was presented in a very logical format.

Overall Rating: 6

I would definitely recommend Digital Cinematography to any 3-D animator who is interested in creating quality computer animations. It's a particularly useful book for those who are getting started as 3-D animators but if you are a serious animator, you'll probably want something more advanced.

Digital Cinematography by Ben de Leeuw, AP Professional/Academic Press, 1997. 265 pages, illustrated. ISBN: 0-12-208875-1.

Bill Fleming is President of Komodo Studio, one of the world's leading Photorealistic 3-D studios that specializes in creatures and characters for broadcast and film. He is recognized as a leading authority on Photorealistic 3-D graphics and creature/character creation and is the author of the 3-D Photorealism Toolkit *published by John Wiley and Sons, Inc.*

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

THE NEW MAYA SETS SAIL

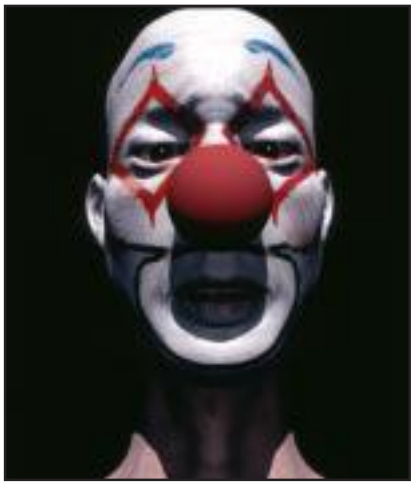
by Max Sims

On February 1, Alias|Wavefront is beginning to ship their latest animation software, Maya and Maya Artisan. Maya runs on Silicon Graphics hardware with R4000 or higher processor, 24-bit graphics and OpenGL native preferred. Maya will perform significantly better on current generation hardware, i.e. Silicon Graphics O2 and Octane. Sometime after it will run on Wintel/NT, as well as the forthcoming SGI "Visual PC."

The salient point of Maya is the ability to remap relationships on the fly.

Alias|Wavefront's position and ubiquity in the high-end animation market responded to customers needs by listening and designing for their production paradigm. Their aggressive technology agenda and desire for character animation lead to opening up the tools even more so than Power Animator or Dynamation. On first impression, Maya seems like the amalgamation of TDI's Explore, Wavefront's Kinemation and Dynamation, as well as Alias PowerAnimator. Many of the familiar features are there, but the salient point of Maya is the ability to remap relationships on the fly. The system architecture was written from the ground up for maximum performance. There is no longer 1980s legacy code that hampers development or simple features like a universal undo.

Three main architectural components of Maya are the Dependency Graph, MEL scripting and a C++ API. The dependency graph can be distilled to nodes with attributes that are connected. The power of this is the artist's ability to reconnect or remap relationships on the fly. This permits features like animatible construction history or using surface normals to be generated by an entirely unrelated animation. I find this alone brimming with creative challenges. The next most accessible feature is MEL scripting. MEL stands for Maya Embedded Language. It is the command and scripting language that can be utilized for creating a custom UI or repetitive set of commands. I come from an artistic background and see its usefulness but won't get into it as deep as a TD (Technical Director) would. The Maya C++ API permits Plug-in or custom development for proprietary tools.



***Bingo*, a software demonstration project created by Chris Landreth using Maya, will be screened at SIGGRAPH '98. Courtesy of and © Alias|Wavefront.**

Production Testing

Alias|Wavefront has developed Maya with two in-house productions. One is Ruby's Saloon done by the in-house development team and expert users. The other project slated to be completed by April for SIGGRAPH submission is Bingo, directed by the Oscar-nominated Chris Landreth (The End). He has recorded Greg Kotis' Disregard This Play from the Neo-Futurists Theater company and will lead a team on demonstrating Maya's capabilities. The clown image shows a new level of naturalistic human representation that Landreth has pursued in his art.

The mind blower is script painting which allows MEL scripts to make custom results.

A small group of beta sites, including this author, have been participating in the Maya Development Partners Team. Based on a great deal of beta testing and resulting input, Maya has been through a lot of changes which has resulted in a delay of introduction. However, the stability and changes were worth the wait. Contrary to the beta agreement a great deal of production work has already been done. Dan DeLeeuw of Dream

Quest Images is using Maya for the forthcoming *Mighty Joe Young*. Derald Hunt is currently animating *Adventures of Spiderman*, a Universal theme park project, using MEL scripting to animate easily Octo's extendible arms and hands. Daniel Hornick and Rob Aitcheson, formerly of Alias|Wavefront, can open up 160,000 frames of motion-capture data and deal with the complete skeletal hierarchy. This would choke any system currently available. Loren Olsen from Rhonda Graphics presented a commercial that involved a very heavy model of the complete city of Phoenix and was able to manipulate it, shading it, in real-time. Rhonda Graphics' spot, *Running Scared*, for golf company Ping used particles as sprites of grass while a hole eluded the golf ball. Maya production work has also been broadcast on Gene Roddenberry's *Earth: Final Conflict*.

The Maya F/X package is a combination of Dynamation and PowerAnimator software particles.

Maya Artisan

The second most significant product Alias|Wavefront has introduced is the supremely cool Artisan. This advanced module of Maya permits artists to sculpt with brushes and tools much easier than the tedious pushing and pulling of CVs (Control Vertices). The tools can be used with a tablet or a mouse. In many ways, this gives greater leverage to an artist's ability to draw or sculpt, not to the true techie. The key tools are the sculpt surfaces, paint select CVs, paint weights and MEL script painting tools. The artist is given a circle with a normal to the surface and paints on the actual surface geometry picking CVs and modifying them. The sculpt surface tool pushes or pulls the surface based on the brush settings. The key distinction is that this is not a texture or displacement map but the actual surface. Paint select CVs are the 3-D equivalent of a lasso pick, like in Adobe's Photoshop. Painting weights permit cluster (CV groups) weights on geometry. An example would be: a cape on a character could be set to a heavy weight on the shoulders and a lighter setting at the edges. A wind force would blow the cape by using softbody dynamics whose animation would transfer to the weighted clusters. The real mind-blower is script painting which allows MEL scripts to make custom results. A piece of geometry can be captured and emitted from the brush, for instance, buildings for a city or variable sized trees.

Workflow Paradigms

The current trend in digital studios is to breakdown the work between specialists to finer and finer categories. At ILM modelers are divided between "hard" and "creature," as well as Modeling TDs. Maya's openness to MEL scripting and the C++ API at first impression tends to favor the very technical, in order to get at the higher level functions. Less technical people, however, are being hired by studios because of their innate artistic skills. Maya programmers can set up a character UI that would leave only key framing and posing slider bars to let an animator just animate. This would hide the inevitable complexity of the matrix of possibilities Maya offers. My personal opinion at first was that the TDs had won the battle between science and art. Upon closer inspection and use of Maya, I feel that even an art school type like myself could use MEL scripting. The standard tools offered are more than enough to accomplish complex character animation. Release 1.0 does not offer all the tools in the entire Alias|Wavefront product suite, therefore my cut of

This natural scene was created using Maya by G. Mundell, P. Roy and M. Kitchen. Courtesy of and © Alias|Wavefront.

PowerAnimator and 3D Studio Max will still be used for advanced modeling or polygonal tools for games. The backwards compatibility with PowerAnimator 8.0 is excellent with only very minor things changing due to the new architecture.

The only true complaint is the complexity of having so many tools at your disposal.

Animation Features

Maya's first iteration is geared for serious character animation. All the advanced cluster technology from PowerAnimator, sculpt tools from Explore and Flexors from Kinemation are combined in Maya. Lattices, sculpt objects and clusters can be layered and re-ordered. Wrinkle tools and bind skin permit more realistic surfacing for animating models. Overlapping Flexors drive deformations by transformations of one or more joints. It is ideal for animating muscles and skin. Stitch surfaces remove gaps between adjacent surfaces and

keep them continuous during animation even when they are deformed. The skeleton and inverse kinematics tools are similar to PowerAnimator 8.5 with handy, direct manipulators.

The Maya F/X package is a combination of Dynamation and PowerAnimator software particles. The best feature is the ability to render on graphics hardware with commensurate speed increase of the graphics board. Display mode controls include texturing, line smoothing, geometry mask, multipass rendering, anti-aliasing with edge smoothing control and motion blur using a hardware accumulation buffer. Rigid body dynamics are standard in the base Maya, while soft bodies are in the F/X module. Soft body dynamics are great for cloth simulation or even Jell-O. The particle systems are fully integrated and extensible, therefore the combinations are endless. The rendering is completely rewritten lacking only interactive photorealistic rendering (IPR) and depth of field cameras which are to come in future releases. The unique rendering component is shading networks. Shared textures and materials within shading networks avoid inefficient duplication and can be recombined to make complex results. The hardware acceleration allows artists to see where the shadows will fall precisely and many times faster than in other packages. The graphics performance of SGI's O2 and Octane are fully exploited in this software.

Ruby's Saloon **is one of two in-house productions being created using Maya by the in-house development team at Alias|Wavefront. Courtesy of and © Alias|Wavefront.**

Last Impressions

Maya is a turning point for Alias|Wavefront. It is the first of a truly new codebase that major software companies are starting to release. Autodesk's 3D Studio Max was the first to evolve. The latest version boasts 1,000 new features due to the advanced architecture. Microsoft's Softimage will be next with Sumatra. Maya will hopefully be able to do the same, now that the architecture is easily extensible. MAYA will also come to the NT platform sometime after the SGI version. This is a considerable proposition from a perception standpoint. I still feel that UNIX is more reliable and robust in production, while the O2 platform has excellent graphics and costs around US $6,000. The pricing is comparable to Softimage products though considerably more than Studio Max. By the time one buys all the plug-ins and gets the system running, I feel that the faster interaction with Maya makes up some of the difference.

The cost of the capital equipment is not the greatest consideration for a digital studio like mine. The quality of results and the time it takes me or my staff to get it done factors heavily into the equation. On a simple checklist all three vendors have similar features but I still prefer Alias|Wavefront's rendering, aggressive technology advancement and speed of use. The key benefit of Maya is how much faster an artist can get work done. The user interface and hardware shading alone permits me greater interaction with my work. Maya Artisan is the coolest thing I've seen in a long time. It would take days to push and pull CVs to get a character's subtle details. Now, it will take a little longer than drawing it on paper.

The only true complaint is the complexity of having so many tools at your disposal. The big studios that can afford a staff of TDs, programmers and animators will be able to get more out of it than small shops or studios of one. The ability to combine and remap nodes to attributes may be the most daunting paradigm. Excellent animators may not have the time and resources to create higher level controls that are relatively easy to do. As I like to say, "It's easy...Once you know how."

Max Sims is the principal of Technolution, a digital studio specializing in entertainment and design visualization. He has written for the Price Waterhouse EMC Tech Forecast, Millimeter, *and* ID Magazine. *He has used Alias|Wavefront products for almost nine years.*

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

The International Museum of Cartoon Art

by Steve Charla

The International Museum of Cartoon Art was founded as the Museum of Cartoon Art by cartoonist Mort Walker in 1974. Dismayed by the fact that so many original works by cartoonists were being lost or destroyed, Walker had begun collecting cartoon art years earlier. The Museum was created to collect, preserve and exhibit original works of cartoon art from all over the world. In 1992, the museum relocated from New York to Boca Raton, Florida, where it's new facility opened to the public in March of 1996. It's collection currently consists of approximately 160,000 pieces of artwork, including original animation art, newspaper strips, comic book art, editorial cartoons, gag cartoons, caricatures, sports cartoons, and book and magazine illustrations. The museum also has over 10,000 books and hundreds of hours of film and video, which will eventually be made available to the public through an on-site research library.

The International Museum of Cartoon Art at 201 Plaza Real in Boca Raton, Florida. Photo courtesy of and © The International Museum of Cartoon Art.

It's collection currently consists of approximately 160,000 pieces of artwork...

The Permanent Collection

Roughly half of the museum's first floor gallery space currently showcases highlights from the Museum's permanent collection. The newspaper strip area contains original pieces covering the medium's century of existence, from art by early masters like Richard Outcault and Winsor McCay to the work of more recent favorites such as Charles Schulz and Bill Watterson. On display in the comic book area are original pages and covers by Jack Kirby, Bob Kane, Curt Swan and others. Gag and magazine cartoons, many of which appeared in The New Yorker, are also represented in the gallery, as are political and editorial cartoons. The museum's Hall of Fame pays tribute to acknowledged pioneers and masters from all genres of the art form. Some of the Hall of Fame's members include Thomas Nast, Richard Outcault, Hal Foster, Walt Disney and Chuck Jones. Part of the museum's gallery space is devoted to changing exhibitions, like the currently running, "Cartoons Go to War" and the upcoming, "Superheroes: Superman and Other Comic Book Legends."

Exhibitions

The museum frequently mounts exhibitions of original animation art as well. The museum's Summer 1997 show, "24 Frames a Second: The Story of Animation," featured artwork from the productions of several major studios, including Walt Disney Productions, Fleischer Studios, Warner Bros. and Hanna-Barbera Productions. The exhibition was divided into six separate areas, each highlighting a different phase in the creative process. Storyboards, concept art, character model sheets, animation drawings, background art, cel set-ups and promotional posters were all featured in the show. Also included were three-dimensional models, mock-ups of nineteenth century experiments in animation and a timeline of significant events in animation history.

The newspaper strip area contains original pieces covering the medium's century of existence...

One of the museum's current exhibitions, "The Gems of Disney,"

A gallery within the museum. Photo courtesy of and © The International Museum of Cartoon Art.

contains approximately seventy pieces of animation art from the private collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad. The show covers the first twenty years of the Walt Disney Studio's existence, beginning in the mid-1920s and ending with Bambi in 1942. Like "24 Frames a Second," this exhibition features several different types of animation art, from inspirational paintings to finished cel set-ups. Included are pieces from classic shorts, such as Steamboat Willie, The Band Concert, and Orphans' Benefit. Several of Disney's "Silly Symphonies" are represented, including Flowers and Trees, the first true Technicolor cartoon. Also on display are works from the early Disney features such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Pinocchio, Fantasia and Dumbo.

Cartoons, comics and animated films are pieces of our culture that deserve to be preserved and exhibited.

In Closing...

Cartoons, comics and animated films are pieces of our culture that deserve to be preserved and exhibited. Like all of the popular arts, they reflect the ideas and attitudes of the society that produced them while simultaneously serving as entertainment. The International Museum of Cartoon Art will continue to educate the public about the art form and act as a repository for these works. Funds are currently being raised to complete construction of the museum's second floor, which will include a permanent gallery of animation art. For more information on the Museum, call (561) 391-2200.

Steve Charla is Collections Coordinator for the International Museum of Cartoon Art in Boca Raton, Florida.

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NEWS

by Wendy Jackson

Business

Cloud 9 For Sale. *The private owners of Marina del Rey, California-based Cloud 9 Interactive plan to sell the company and its' holdings. Company co-founder, president and CEO Debra Streiker-Fine is in discussions with five potential buyers, and says a recent evaluation assesses that the company is worth $20 million. In September 1997, Cloud 9 formed a television production division (AF 9/16/97), Cloud 9 Media, and announced a slate of several projects in development, including animated series Zeroman (with Leslie Nielsen and Amberwood Productions), I Can Be Three (with Epoch Entertainment) and the development and licensing of original animated characters from Cloud 9's interactive Learning Adventure CD-ROM titles. It is not yet known what the fate of these projects will be.*

Pulse Alums Get Jinx-ed. *Former employees of Pulse Entertainment, a game development company which recently formed P7, an alliance with 7th Level Entertainment to focus on Internet-based interactive content, have formed a new game development company called Jinx. Both P7 and publisher Ripcord are minority shareholders in Jinx. Based in San Francisco and headed by co-founders Vinny Carrella and Phill Simon, Jinx is continuing production on Space Bunnies Must Die!, a game slated for release by Ripcord Games in June. Jinx is also developing a sequel to the Pulse title, Bad Mojo. "Pulse is going to concentrate on the burgeoning Internet market and we wanted to stay focused on games," said Jinx president and executive producer Phill Simon, "We've got some ideas for different kinds of games which can be made faster and more cost-effectively."*

M.P.S.C. Surveys Industry. *The Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Union local 839 in Los Angeles released the results of its annual member survey. 39% of the Union's approximately 2,800 members replied to the survey, which reveals some interesting, and sometimes amusing, information, such as: 16.9 % of Local 839 members are originally from outside of the U.S. . . . 31.6% sometimes work non-union. . . . In the past year, 62.4% have worked on animated features, 38.4% on television, 13.7% on direct-to-video and 7.8% on commercials. . . . 25% claim to be afflicted by "stress" and 18% by "irreversible brain damage" as a work-related ailment. . . . furthermore 54% do not know where their membership card is.*

You can read the complete survey results within the January issue of The Peg-Board on the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists web site on Animation World Network.
http://www.awn.com/MPSC839/839INDEX.HTM

Marlon Schulman, vice president of Bandai Entertainment's new Home Video division. Photo courtesy of Bandai.

Bandai Broadens Business. *Tokyo-based Bandai Visual, a division of toy manufacturer Bandai, has launched a new CGI production division called Digital Engine. The company has also launched Bandai Entertainment Video, a U.S.-based division which will handle home video distribution in North America. Marlon W. Schulman, formerly of Orion, has been named vice president of the new distribution division. Two animated feature films are already in production through Digital Engine in Japan. The first project, slated for completion in 1999, is Steam Boy, a science-fiction adventure set in 19th century England and directed by Katsuhiro Otomo (Akira). The second feature, directed by Mamoru Oshii (Ghost in the Shell), is tentatively titled G.R.M. and scheduled for release in 2000. The films will be distributed theatrically before their respective*

video releases. Additional theatrical and direct-to-video content is also being produced by Bandai-owned traditional animation house Sunrise Studio in Japan.

(Colossal) Turns The Page On Chapter 11. San Francisco-based production company (Colossal) Pictures, which filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in May 1996, has agreed to a settlement offered by Cleveland, Ohio-based company, The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, for an undisclosed amount. Colossal filed a lawsuit against The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in June 1997, alleging breach of contract when the former client canceled a multimedia exhibit project which the studio was producing. The incident is cited by Colossal as a contributing factor in the company's bankruptcy. As stated in Colossal's Bankruptcy Agreement, the money received from The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame will be distributed to Colossal creditors on a percentage basis. While the company publicized an "emergence from Chapter 11" in December, several unsecured creditors, including three former sales representatives, will be paid only 29% of the outstanding invoices. "Colossal has gotten away with staying in business without paying their debt. I believe the amount of money left over for the unsecured creditors, who will be paid last, will be little to nothing," said former Colossal rep Mary Vandamme. Though operating on a much smaller scale, Colossal has had a flow of commercial work during the past 18 months in bankruptcy. In December, Colossal signed with two new sales representative companies, Creative Management Partners and Bill Rabin & Associates.

For the backstory on this ongoing saga, visit Karl Cohen's article, "(Colossal) Pictures Proves There is Life After Chapter 11," in the May 1997 issue of *Animation World Magazine.*

John K. Says *South Park* Story Steals. December's debut of the *South Park* Christmas special on Comedy Central may have insulted some conservative viewers with its religious mockery and toilet humor, but it has animator/director John Kricfalusi feeling that imitation may not be the best form of flattery. Kricfalusi, who is best-known as the creator of the cartoon show *Ren & Stimpy,* says that last week's *South Park* episode stole characters and concepts from several of his original properties. The *South Park* episode features a singing, dancing piece of human excrement as a main character named "Mr. Hankey." Kricfalusi says he created a similar talking poop character for Dark Horse Comics over four years ago, called "Nutty the Friendly Dump," which is still unpublished, but was pitched to many networks, including Comedy Central, as part of *The Goddamn George Liquor Show,* which Kricfalusi's company Spumco now broadcasts as an episodic show on the Internet. The web cartoon's first episode, "The Babysitter," which premiered October 15, 1997 (http://www.spumco.com), introduced an entire family of talking poop characters, one of which is complete with a hat and white gloves, like *South Park's* Mr. Hankey.

A talking excrement in Spumco's web cartoon, *The Goddamn George Liquor Show*. © Spumco.

Comedy Central says Kricfalusi's claims have "no merit," and that neither of *South Park's* creator/directors Matt Stone and Trey Parker have ever seen the Spumco web site. Additionally, Comedy Central spokesperson Laura Nelson said that the Mr. Hankey character was created 25 years ago by Trey Parker's father, as a potty-training incentive for the young boy. The *South Park* Christmas episode was watched by over 4 million viewers on Wednesday, earning Comedy Central a record-high 5.4 rating.

In an interview with AWM, Kricfalusi pointed out that an early Christmas episode of *Ren and Stimpy* called "Son of Stimpy" depicted a similarly characterized talking fart. He also added that the show uses the line, "you sick little monkey," popularized on *Ren and Stimpy,* and also feels that the Mr. Hankey concept draws from *Ren and Stimpy's* pseudo-commercial "Log." "We basically gave up on TV a couple of years ago because we couldn't get anyone to understand our humor," Kricfalusi said, "I know what the audience wants, but I can never figure out what the network wants. It's frustrating when a big distribution network shows up with a bunch of your jokes in one episode." Despite his obvious frustration, Kricfalusi admits, *South Park* is "the funniest show on TV right-now.

People

Musical Chairs

Saban Entertainment has named **Jorge Ferreiro** vice president of licensing and merchandising, and **Jamie Simons** editorial director of licensing and merchandising. . . . **Anne Gates** has been named vice

president of business planning for **Disney Interactive.** *She was previously vice president of finance for Disney Consumer Products. . . .* **Metrolight Studios** *has hired* **Mark Rodahl** *as a senior animator,* **Brian Samuels** *as a visual effects supervisor,* **Ron Simonson** *a post-production supervisor and* **Jesse Silver**, *formerly of Warner Bros. Feature Animation, as an art director. . . . Film critic and animation historian* **Leonard Maltin** *has begun teaching the "Theatrical Film Symposium" class at the University of Southern California (USC) School of Cinema-Television . . . .Paris-based producer* **Gaumont** *has named* **Thomas Kornfeld** *director of international sales. In this role he will be responsible for the sale of television product to Asian territories. He was previously manager of international sales for Gaumont, handling territories in Eastern Europe and Africa. . . .* **Julie Haddon**, *marketing director at the New York-based office of Blue Sky|VIFX, has moved west to Palo Alto, California to take on a post as director of marketing for* **Pacific Data Images (PDI)**. *The computer animation studio, currently in production on the DreamWorks animated feature Antz, also recently hired* **Regina Wright** *as director of Human Resources. She was previously director of Human Resources at 20th Century Fox.. . . . Atlanta-based Internet and multimedia service company* **Crawford Intermedia** *has announced the hires of* **Minsoo Pak** *(formerly director of multimedia at Ogilvy & Mather) as creative director,* **Will Weyer** *as art director,* **Karl Wattenburg** *as a designer and* **Laura Citron** *as production manager. . . . .* **Nelvana Communications**, *the Los Angeles-based programming and merchandise licensing subsidiary of Canadian animation studio,* **Nelvana** *Limited has hired* **Sidney A. Kaufman** *as executive vice president. Kaufman was president and CEO of Total Licensing Services which he founded in 1994. Working with* **Nelvana** *Communications president Toper Taylor, Kaufman will oversee worldwide merchandise licensing for* **Nelvana** *properties. . . . Visual effects producer* **Jenny Fulle** *has joined* **Sony Pictures Imageworks** *as executive producer. She was most recently an effects producer for DreamWorks and previously for Warner Digital. . . .* **Charles Gibson**, *co-founder of ten-year-old, L.A.-based effects/animation house* **Rhythm & Hues**, *has left the company to pursue freelance work. . . .* **Jenny Bright** *was promoted to executive producer at 525* **Post Production**. *She has been a visual effects producer with the Los Angeles-based company since 1994. . . .* **Leslie M. Levine** *has been named licensing consultant for* **Hearst Entertainment**'s *merchandise and licensing division, which was recently relocated from New York to Los Angeles. Levine was most recently vice president at Playmates Toys. . . .*

UK Council Commissions Creators. *The Arts Council of England has doled out commissions to five artists, as part of their Channel Four-sponsored "Animate!" program which commissions innovative and experimental animation for television. Production budgets ranging from U.K. £12,000 to £25,000 were awarded to Paul Bush for a project titled Nursery Poetry, Jo Ann Kaplan for An Anatomy of Melancholy, Oliver Harrison for Love is All, John Parry for Salvage and Tim Macmillan for Ferment. Since launching in 1990, Animate! has supported 35 projects including Karen Kelly's Stressed, Run Wrake's Juke Box, William Latham's Biogenesis, Kayla Parker's Cage of Flame and Tim Webb's 15th February.*

In Passing...

Evening of Remembrance. *On Saturday, February 7, at 7:00 p.m. the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Local 839, ASIFA-Hollywood and Women In Animation presented the third annual "Evening of Remembrance," honoring members of the animation community who passed away in 1997. This year's event was held at the Hollywood Heritage Museum at the DeMille Barn, 2100 North Highland Ave (across from the Hollywood Bowl) in Hollywood. Honorees were: Marie Cornell, Phyllis Craig, Lillian Disney, John Gentilella, Stan Green, John Guerin, Cameron Guess, Jerry Hathcock, Les Kline, Charlotte Levitow, Frank Little, Harry Love, Dick Lucas, Virginia McColley, Don Messick, Milt Neil, Zoë Parker, Jack Parr, Jane Phillippi, Frances Ross, Don Selders, Jerry Smith, Bruce Strock, Fred Stuhr, Dick Thomas and Beverly Ware.*

Mae Questel, *best known as the voice of cartoon characters Betty Boop and Olive Oyl died on January 4, 1998 at her home in Manhattan, New York. She was 89. Questel was born in 1909 in the Bronx, New York. At age 17 she started her career in entertainment as a vaudeville performer. Then New York-based animator Max Fleischer discovered Questel in her capacity as an impersonator of Helen Kane, and signed her as the giddy, childish voice of his emerging character Betty Boop. One of the first Betty Boop cartoons, Stopping*

the Show drew from Questel's stage experience, depicting Betty as a vaudeville impersonator of popular performers such as Maurice Chevalier. In all, she performed Betty Boop's voice in more than 100 cartoon shorts produced between 1931 and 1939. In the Popeye cartoons, which started at Fleischer Studios in 1933, Questel performed the voice of Olive Oyl, and when the Popeye shorts were produced by Famous Studios from 1942 to 1957, she voiced most of the studios' female characters, including Little Audrey. On occasion, she even filled in for Jack Mercer as the voice of Popeye! In 1988, Questel performed the voice of Betty Boop in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* Also, on the screen, she acted in numerous live action films in the 1960s-80s, including in the role of Woody Allen's mother in *New York Stories* (1989).

The March 1998 issue of *Animation World Magazine* will include a feature article about Mae Questel, written by Andrew Lederer.

Cameron Guess *died on December 12, 1997 at his home in Winter Springs, Florida. He was 61. An animator and producer, Guess worked at the National Film Board of Canada (NFBC) from the late 1950s until 1963. There, he worked on the animated short The Great Toy Robbery directed by Jeff Hale and written by Derek Lamb. After receiving a large inheritance, Guess relocated to San Francisco, where he founded the now defunct animation company, Cameron Guess & Associates in 1964. He was joined by Jeff Hale, Derek Lamb and animator Barrie Nelson. The company produced two animated shorts, The Well (1965) and The Shepherd (1967), the latter of which was nominated for an Academy Award. When the theatrical cartoons industry declined in the mid sixties, Guess moved to Florida, where he is survived by his wife and one daughter.*

Lillian Bounds Disney, *widow of Walt Disney, died on Tuesday, December 16, 1997 at her home in West Los Angeles. She was 98 years old. Walt Disney died almost 31 years ago to the day (December 15, 1966). Lillian Bounds came to Los Angeles and got a job as a cel painter at Walt Disney's fledgling studio in 1923. Approximately two years later, Lillian and Walt were married on July 13, 1925, near her birthplace in Lewiston, Idaho. It is believed that Lillian suggested the name "Mickey" for Walt Disney's character originally named "Mortimer Mouse." Since Walt's death, Lillian has been active in charitable activities, and in 1987 she made a landmark gift of U.S. $50 million to the Music Center of Los Angeles County, to build the Walt Disney Concert Hall which is set to open in 2001 in downtown Los Angeles. She has also made many donations to Cal Arts animation program. Lillian is survived by one daughter (Roy Disney is the son of Walt's brother), as well as ten grandchildren and thirteen great grandchildren.*

Films

PDI Signs On For *Shrek. DreamWorks has confirmed it will contract Pacific Data Images (PDI) to animate their planned feature film, Shrek, set for release in 2000. Palo Alto, California-based PDI is currently in production on DreamWorks' Antz, a partial CG feature slated for release in 1999. The film, based on a children's book by William Steig, has been in development for longer than usual as DreamWorks reportedly looked for another production studio to complete the animation, while PDI was busy with Antz. DreamWorks owns 40% of PDI.*

De Nooijers Make *Exit. Paul and Menno De Nooijer, the Dutch father and son animation directing team who have created over half a dozen animated shorts such as At One View and 1995:1995 have completed their first feature film, EXIT. EXIT premiered at the Dutch Film Festival and will be screened in coming months at film festivals in Portugal, France and Germany. The 80 minute live-action film features*

A disturbing image from Paul and Menno de Nooijer's *Exit*.
© Paul and Menno de Nooijer.

roughly 10 minutes of animation. It was conceived four years ago as a fully-animated work, but the economics of time caused the project to evolve in the direction of live-action. "So many animators are moving into live-action features, especially in Europe," said Paul DeNooijer, "The market for short films is decreasing, and there are more opportunities to sell a feature film."

Visual Effects

FX Affects

Four Media Company, *the Burbank-based company which co-owns Medialab Studio L.A, has*

signed a deal with Visualize, Inc. to acquire **POP Studios,** *a Venice, California-based company which offers digital production services including visual effects and animation. POP will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Four Media Company, retain its present management and continue to operate under the POP name. The acquisition is expected to be complete by January 31, 1998. . . . Boston-based broadcast design firm* **Viewpoint Studios** *and Seattle-based stop-motion and motion control studio* **Heck Yes! Productions** *(formerly Stratos Pictures) have formed an alliance through which they will pool resources and collaborate on some commercial projects. The companies are already working on research and development for future projects, and are jointly bidding on several broadcast and cable jobs. . . .* **Engineering Animation (EAI)** *created 3-D computer animated effects for Fleet Command, a two-hour special about military training for the Discovery Channel. . . .*

Television

Fox Kids, Family Channel To Get [Very] Animated. *News Corp./Saban co-venture Fox Kids Worldwide has revealed its programming plans for its newly-acquired cable network, The Fox Family Channel. The Fox Family Channel will launch on August 15, 1998 with a kids' daytime schedule that includes 50% original, first-run programming. Following the lead of competitor's success with program packaging, Fox Family Channel will debut with a slate of four themed, "branded" daytime blocks. "Morning Scramble" for kids of all ages, will include the animated series Wowser (Saban), Bit the Cupid (Saban), Little Mouse on the Prairie (Saban), Eek!Stravaganza (Nelvana), All Dogs Go to Heaven (MGM Animation) and the live-action series Pee-Wee's Playhouse. The second block, "The Captain's Treasure House," is aimed at pre-schoolers with animated shows like The Magic Adventures of Mumfie (Britt Allcroft Productions) and Tabaluga (EM-TV). Tic Tac Toons, an all-animation block, will feature Bobby's World (Film Roman), Saban's Adventures of Oliver Twist (Saban), Heathcliff (Saban), The Real Ghostbusters (Columbia Tri-Star), and Classic Harvey Toons (Harvey Entertainment). The last kids block of the day before family-oriented prime-time programming starts is The Basement, which will premiere the animated series Bad Dog (Saban), Monster Farm (Saban), Water Melon (Saban) and Badaboom, (in development at Saban) a compilation of outrageous animation.*

***Saban's Adventures of Oliver Twist* will be included in the lineup for the new Fox Family Channel. © Saban.**

The Fox Family Channel will reach 74 million homes at its' launch, which News Corp. President & COO/Fox Group Chairman Peter Chernin said, "will be one of the largest debuts in the history of television." He added, "This, combined with the 98 percent reach of U.S. households with Fox Kids Network, gives us an unparalleled programming, promotional and distribution platform."

Fox also announced its 1998-99 schedule for Fox Kids Network, including eight new animated series coming in fall 1998. New to the Fox Kids Saturday morning lineup will be Mr. Potato Head (in development at Saban) Woody Woodpecker (the new show from Universal Cartoon Studios), Godzilla (Columbia Tri-Star), Mad Jack (Saban) Silver Surfer (Saban) and Captain America (Saban). New to weekday afternoons will be Scholastic's The Magic School Bus (Scholastic/Nelvana), Spy Dogs (Saban) and Oggy and the Cockroaches (Gaumont) which will be combined with "Space Goofs" (also Gaumont) as The Space Goofs and Oggy Show. Current shows being renewed for 1998-99 include Steven Spielberg Presents Toonsylvania (DreamWorks), Life With Louie (Hyperion), Spider-Man (Saban), Ned's Newt (Nelvana) and Sam & Max (Nelvana).

Nick Says "Oh Yeah!" to Shorts. *Nickelodeon will premiere its new series of animated shorts in July, with the first of 13 half-hour episodes comprised of new, seven-minute cartoons. The series titled Oh Yeah! Cartoons! is being created and produced by Fred Seibert, the former head of Hanna-Barbera*

***Max and His Special Problem* by Dave Wasson, one of Nickelodeon's *Oh Yeah! Cartoon!*s. © Nickelodeon.**

Cartoons and a key player behind the development of the What A Cartoon! shorts for Cartoon Network. The shorts are being directed by 17 different creators: Mike Bell, Bob Boyle, Bill Burnett, Greg Emison, John Eng, Butch Hartman, Larry Huber, Alex Kirwan, Seth MacFarlane, Zac Moncrief, Carlos Ramos, Rob Renzetti, Miles Thompson, Byron Vaughns, Pat Ventura, Vincent Waller and Dave Wasson.

CBS Re-Animates Its Saturday AM Line-Up! *CBS Television, which pulled out of animation programming with its' live-action-filled Saturday morning slate for the 1997/98 season, has announced a bold move to return to animated programming. The network has signed an unprecedented, two-year deal with Canadian animation producer NELVANA Limited, wherein NELVANA will produce six animated series for CBS' Saturday morning block starting in fall 1998. CBS' Saturday morning block has received consistently low ratings as a result of competition from cable outlets such as Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, and from studio-affiliated networks such as ABC /Disney and Fox Kids/Saban. "With this schedule, we are renewing our commitment to programming that meets the dual challenge of meeting the FCC educational requirements and capturing the interest of children," said Lucy Johnson, senior vice president of Daytime/Children's Programming and Special Projects at CBS. It is rare for a network to buy a whole block of programming from one supplier, especially from an international one. Toper Taylor, president of NELVANA Communications, said that this precedent-setting deal could up the ante for American independent producers who have traditionally supplied networks with programming. "This is an enormous step for international independent companies to get a foothold in the international marketplace." All six shows will meet FCC educational requirements, and are being co-financed by Nelvana's multiple international co-production partners. Franklin, (7:00) which follows the adventures of a cherubic turtle, is based on a series of books by Paulette Bourgeois and currently airs on The Family Channel in Canada. Anatole, (7:30) the story of a Parisian mouse and his family, is based on a book series by Eve Titus, and will teach kids about diversity. The Dumb Bunnies, (8:00) based on Dav Pikey's book series, is a comedy about a family of naive rabbits, that will teach kids about logical reasoning. From the Files of the Flying Rhinoceros, (11:00) based on books by Ray Nelson and Douglas Kelly, will be produced in association with Big Daddy Productions. Guardians of the Legend (11:30) is an action series about mythological stories, based on the Myth Men book series by Laura Geringer. The one show not based on books is Birdz, (8:30) a comedy about a family of birds.*

Convulsion-Causing Cartoons. *On December 16, 1997 in Japan, hundreds of people, mostly children, simultaneously suffered seizures while watching an episode of the animated series Pokemon (Pocket Monsters). The highest-rated show in its weekly 6:30 p.m. time slot, Pokemon is watched by millions of children on the television network TV Tokyo. Japanese media reported more than 700 viewers experienced convulsions, vomiting, fainting and other symptoms which seem to have been triggered by a scene about 20 minutes into the half-hour episode in which a character's eyes flashed repeatedly and a bright red explosion filled the screen. The phenomenon medically referred to as "television epilepsy" or "photosensitive epilepsy" can be caused by strobes or flashing lights and has been attributed to similar reactions to some video game graphics. The series Pokemon is based on a Nintendo Game Boy video game called Pocket Monsters. Nintendo, aware of previous epileptic reactions to video games, issues a health warning on all of its software. Broadcaster TV Tokyo offered an on-air apology and issued a health warning for the series, and is studying other episodes as a precaution. "Pokemon" show producers Shogakukan Production Co. were surprised by the incident because similar effects have been used in previous episodes, without this viewer reaction. Investigations into the incident are being conducted by Tokyo Police, The Health and Welfare Ministry, The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and a panel of experts assigned by TV Tokyo.*

Home Video

Disney's February Flicks. *Walt Disney Home Video will release several animated films on home video in February, 1998. Hercules will be available on February 3 for $26.99. On February 6, a collection of five Valentine's Day-themed titles will be released, comprised of re-packaged shorts and TV series episodes: Winnie the Pooh Un-Valentine's Day (30 minutes, $14.99), Mickey Loves Minnie (25 minutes, $9.99), Disney's*

***Mickey Loves Minnie.* © Disney.**

Love Tales (25 minutes, $9.99), Aladdin & Jasmine's Moonlight Magic (45 minutes, $9.99) and Disney's Sweetheart Stories (23 minutes, $9.99).

David Hand's *Animaland,* a video collection of nine animated shorts produced in the 1940s, will be released in April 1998 in the U.S. by Just For Kids Home Video. The films, *Ginger Nutt's Christmas Circus, Ginger Nutt's Forest Dragon, Ginger Nutt's Bee Bother, It's A Lovely Day, The House Cat, The Australian Platypus, The Cuckoo* and *The Ostrich and the Lion* were produced by David Hand, who became one of Walt Disney's first staff animators in 1930, working on films such as *Snow White, Bambi* and several Silly Symphonies shorts. In 1944, he left Disney and moved to England where he established GB Animation, where he produced the *Animaland* and *Musical Paintbox* series for J. Arthur Rank. The films were recently restored and released by an Italian company, Alfadedis in 1996. In 1992, Streamline Pictures released a video (now out of print) containing four of the shorts, but Just For Kids' forthcoming release will be the first complete set of *Animaland* titles to be released on home video in the U.S.

David Hand's *Animaland*, coming to video in 1998 from Just For Kids Home Video. © Just For Kids Home Video.

For more information, read Giannalberto Bendazzi's review of the *Animaland* films, published in the January 1997 issue of *Animation World Magazine.*

Another Beauty From Disney. Walt Disney Home Video will release a second direct-to-video title based on the theatrical feature, *Beauty and the Beast. Belle's Magical World*, a 70-minute animated video comprised of three "storybook chapter" episodes, will be available for $22.99 in U.S. stores on January 13, 1998.

CPM Ships 3 Anime Titles. Central Park Media released three Japanese anime titles on home video on January 6, 1998. *Legend of Lemnear* (45 minutes) is an action-adventure film based on a popular manga comics series which CPM is releasing concurrently with the video. *Peacock King-Spirit Warrior: Festival of the Ogres' Revival* is a 55 minute title in the mystical/fantasy *Peacock King* series. *Black Jack-Clinical Chart 5* is a 50 minute adventure title in Tezuka Productions' *Black Jack* series. All three titles are dubbed in English and available for $19.99 each.

Hallmark Joins The Family. Family Home Entertainment (FHE), a subsidiary of Live Entertainment, has signed a deal with Hallmark Home Entertainment to distribute Hallmark home video product in the U.S. The partnership will effectively merge part of Hallmark Home Entertainment into FHE. The animated product that this deal brings together includes HHE's new "Crayola Presents Animated Tales" line and FHE's *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and other Rankin/Bass holiday specials. As part of the deal, Hallmark Home Entertainment (HHE) president Steve Beeks will become president of Live Home Entertainment and HHE senior vice president Glenn Ross will join Live as president of Family Home Entertainment and executive vice president of Home Entertainment. Hallmark Home Entertainment will remain a separate company handling its own marketing, merchandising, manufacturing, promotion and publicity.

Internet & Interactive

Absolut Adds 8 Animations. Absolut Vodka will add eight new animated films to the 23 films already available on its "Absolut Panushka" web site at www.absolutvodka.com. The eight new ten-second experimental mini-films will premiere at the Sundance Film Festival next week. Added to the site's roster of 23 filmmakers are Tânia C. Cançado (Brazil), Nedeljko Dragic (Yugoslavia), James Duesing (US), Caroline Leaf (US), Jan Lenica (Poland), Alexander Marinov (Bulgaria), Ishu Patel (India) and Erica Russell (UK). In addition, the web site features new animated directory pages by the likes of Eric Patric (US), Pawel Borowski (Poland), Kirsten Winter (Germany), Yuriko Senoo (Japan), Alexander Gajic (Czech Republic) and Enes Krluc (Bosnia). The site is curated by Christine Panushka (USC) and features a history of experimental animation by Dr. William Moritz.

Quick Bytes

BLITCOM LLC., *a company established in August 1997 by Mark Pesce and Jan Mallis, has launched The Blitcom Channel (http://www.blitcom.net), a new network for VRML programming on the World Wide Web. The advertising-supported entertainment service will offer users content delivered through Netscape Netcaster, Marimba Castanet Transmitter and Cosmo Player technology...* **Brilliant Digital Entertainment** *has formed a license agreement with DC Comics wherein they will develop interactive content based on comic super hero characters. The first co-production will be Superman Multipath Movie, to be released in 1998. Brilliant Digital Entertainment's line of Multipath Movies are 3-D, interactive animated stories (like a cross between a movie and a video game)which will be released on CD-ROM and the Internet beginning in January. . . . Superman is also featured in a new CD-ROM game from* **Knowledge Adventure** *called Superman Activity Center. Aimed at kids ages 5-10, the title features games and puzzles that focus on problem-solving skills. Superman Activity Center is available in hybrid Windows/Macintosh format for $20.00. . . .*

Commercials

Commercial Studios! What animated spots have you worked on? Send your press releases and production updates to SPOTLIGHT at editor@awn.com or by fax to (213) 464-5914.

Spotlight

New York-based **J.J. Sedelmaier Productions** *created a 30 second animated commercial for Alabama Power, through the agency Shepardson Stern & Kaminsky. The spot, titled Power Lines, uses a simple black line to illustrate the danger of electrical lines. J.J. Sedelmaier served as director and designer, Tom Yohe Jr. as art director and John Paratore, Katie Sheehan and Mike Wetterhahn as additional animators. . . .* **J.J. Sedelmaier Productions** *and* **Tape House Digital** *collaborated on Heartburn, an animated commercial for a heartburn medicine called Prilosec. Based on illustrations by C.F. Payne, the 30 second spot features cel animation by J.J. Sedelmaier and computer animation by Tape House Digital (visual effects director: Michael Suissa) .*

J.J. Sedelmaier Productions and Tape House Digital's *Heartburn.* Photo courtesy of J.J. Sedelmaier Productions.

. . . **Loconte Goldman Design** *created a broadcast design package of main title treatments for KTLA Los Angeles News, using AVID and Henry to composite animated text and graphics on top of live-action film. . . .* **Aardman Animations,** *innovators of the clay animation style popularized in the Wallace and Gromit short films, created a commercial for the U.S. restaurant chain Burger King. The 30-second clay-animated spot, directed by Steve Box, promotes the food chain's french fries with characters created specifically for the campaign (not Wallace and Gromit!). . . .* **Lee Hunt Associates** *created 27 id spots for The Disney Channel's three daily program blocks: Little Kids, Kids and Kids & Family. The ten-second spots combine live-action and animation in scenarios such as a family entering an animated world after riding bikes over a Disney Channel logo painted on the street. . . .*

Technology

SGI, Microsoft Turn Up Heat On "Fahrenheit." *Following their recent announcement of a plan to co-produce graphics software (AF 12/16/97), Microsoft and Silicon graphics have further defined their joint venture, code-named "Fahrenheit." The Fahrenheit project will create a suite of application programming interfaces (APIs) for Microsoft's DirectX multimedia architecture on the Windows operating system as well as the Silicon Graphics UNIX-based platform. (An API is a common interface which enables developers to maximize acceleration capabilities of a computer.) The Fahrenheit APIs will be developed in conjunction with software and hardware development partners, including Intel Corp., makers of the Pentium processor. The Fahrenheit architecture will be the basis for third-party graphics and visualization applications including Internet, games, business, digital content creation, CAD/CAM, medical and scientific applications. During the development of the Fahrenheit project, Microsoft and Silicon Graphics have also agreed to work together in support of the development of Windows-based graphics applications for professionals through the OpenGL APIs and the development of Windows-based graphics applications for consumers through the Direct3D API. They will deliver new APIs, DDKs and Software Development Kits*

(SDKs) in phases over the next two and a half years.

Education

'98 NATE Slate. *The New Animation Technology Conference & Exposition (NATE), an event launched at the World Animation Celebration (WAC) in 1997, has lined up its slate of classes for the second edition, to be held February 17-20 during WAC in Pasadena, California. The event will offer more than 72 classes, including a special keynote speech by Pixar's chief technology officer and executive vice president Ed Catmull. Instructors from companies including Blue Sky|VIFX, Cinesite, DreamWorks, Digital Domain and Klasky Csupo will teach classes on using animation software such as ElectricImage, Animo, Toonz, Softimage, 3D StudioMax, Photoshop, PowerAnimator, After Effects, Maya, Hash Animation:Master, LightWave 3D and Fractal Painter. For registration information, visit http://www.etshows.com.*

Call for Entries

Cardiff Gets Vital! *The International Animation Festival Cardiff has been given a new name and design in preparation for the next edition, June 23-28, 1998. The festival now known as Vital! International Animation Festival Cardiff is accepting film entries until the end of February. For entry forms and additional information, call Nina Caton at (44) 171 494-0506.*

Read a review of the 1996 Cardiff International Animation Festival, in the July 1996 issue of Animation World Magazine.
Also look for our Cardiff '98 review in the August 1998 issue.

Aussie FX Fest. *The Australian Effects and Animation Festival (AEAF), presented by Digital Media World (the same organization that put on November's LEAF in London) accepted entries until January 23, 1998. The competition awards excellence in special effects and animation in the following categories: feature film, short film, titles/idents, commercials, simulation, education/training and student work. Winners will be announced during AEAF, March 18-20, 1998 in Sydney, Australia. For information, visit http://www.dmw.com.au*

Computer Animation '98, Geneva. *The eleventh annual Computer Animation Film Festival and Conference will take place in Geneva, Switzerland in September 1998. Entries of computer animated films are being accepted until February 28, 1998. This event is held in partnership with the Computer Animation '98 Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 8-10, 1998. For information and entry forms, contact computer.animation @cui.unige.ch*

One Show. *The One Club for Art & Copy, a New York organization, accepted entries for its annual One Show advertising competition until January 30, 1998. Categories in which animated productions could be entered include Television Commercial, Television Campaign and Multi-Media Campaign. Entry fees range from U.S. $90.00 to $300.00. For information and entry forms*

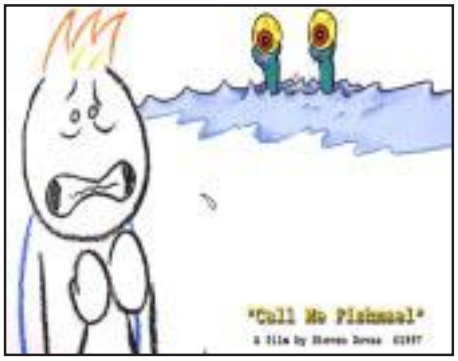
visit, http://www.oneclub.com

CSUN Animation Festival. *Vidimation, an Associated Students organization of California State University Northridge (CSUN) is accepting entries for The California Sun International Animation Festival until March 1, 1998. The program will be selected by a panel of industry animators, and awards include cash prizes. The per-film entry fee is $25.00 The event will take place in May 1998 at California State University Northridge. For information and entry forms, visit http://www.csun.edu/~jpr45052/anifest*

I.D. Seeks Interactive Innovators. *I.D. Magazine is accepting entries for its annual Interactive Media Design Review until January 5, 1998 (postmark). Categories include entertainment/games, web sites, advertising/promotions and student work. 1997 winners include The Neverhood's debut game, The Neverhood, the Hotwired web site and Disktractions, a CD-ROM project by two students at the Royal College of Art in London. Entry fees range from $40 to $75 per entry. For entry forms and more information, call (212) 447-1400 or visit http://www.idonline.com*

Events

Slamdance, *the film festival which began in 1995 as a concurrent alternative to the elitism of the Sundance Film Festival, took place January 16-23, 1998 in Park City, Utah. While the festival does not yet include an animation category, there will be*



Steve Dovas' *Call Me Fishmael* was screened at the 1998 Slamdance festival. © Steve Dovas .

two films screened this year that will be of interest to animation fans: *Call Me Fishmael,* a 3 minute animated short by New Yorker Steven Dovas, about a writer pitching his "big Hollywood script." Also, while Trey Parker's second film, *Orgazmo,* is screening across town at Sundance, the *South Park* co-creator's first feature *Cannibal,* a musical based on a true story, will be screened at Slamdance. For screening times and festival information, visit http://www.slamdance.com

Games And Animation Interact At MILIA. MILIA, Europe's market for interactive multimedia, will present a conference called "Towards the convergence of animation and video games" during the second and third days of its annual event in Cannes, France, February 7-11, 1998. Ten animation projects will be presented to interactive publishers at MILIA. The objective of these networking sessions and forums is to bring together publishers, producers and developers of interactive products to promote partnerships. For information about this partnership program, visit Frederique Doumic's article, "MIPCOM Meets MILIA" in the December issue of *Animation World Magazine.* For MILIA registration information, visit the MILIA web site, accessible through Animation World Network's Calendar of Events section.

Southampton Conference & Archive. The Southampton Institute in England is organizing a new academic animation conference (April 6-8, 1998) and opening The Southampton Institute International Animation Research Archive (SIIARA). An exhibit of production artwork from the Halas and Batchelor collection, including art from the 1954 animated feature film *Animal Farm* has been donated to SIIARA by the family of the late John Halas and will be showcased to the public at Southampton Institute's Millais Gallery, March 19-April 17, 1998. The conference in April will include several screenings and presentations about Halas & Batchelor, by Stan Hayward, Pat Raine Webb and Vivien Halas. Additional topics will be presented by Gunnar Strom (early animated commercials), Mike Jones (early computer animation), Nick Phillips (Bob Godfrey), Ron Geesin (animation and sound) Robin Allan (19th century illustrators and early Disney) and Jilly Maclaren (Internet and diagrammatic animation). For more information, contact john.southall@solent.ac.uk

Animated Christmas Screenings. On December 27 and 28, 1997 and on January 1 and 2, 1998, The American Museum of the Moving Image (MOMI) in New York presented *Wishing You An Animated Christmas,* a series of classic seasonal animated film screenings. Included in the program are Harman-Ising's 1939 *Peace on Earth* directed by Hugh Harman; TVC's 1982 special *The Snowman* directed by John Coates; Soyuzmultfilm's 1957 feature *The Snow Queen* produced by Lev Atamanov; R.O. Blechman's 1958 Cinemascope short *Juggler of Our Lady,* based on the recently re-released 1952 book and produced by CBS/Terrytoons and *Simple Gifts,* Blechman's 1977 PBS animated special which launched the director's production company The Ink Tank.

Awards

Jules Engel To Receive 'Friz' Award. Jules Engel, the founding director of the California Institute of the Arts Experimental Animation Program, will receive the "Friz" lifetime achievement award for animation at the 1998 Santa Clarita International Film Festival. Jules Engel began his career in the late 1940s at Walt Disney Studios where he was first recognized for his work on the Chinese and Russian dance sequences in *Fantasia.* Later, he was one of the original members of the studio United Productions of America (UPA), and with the late Robert ("Bobe") Cannon, developed such cartoons as *Gerald Mc Boing Boing, Madeline* and *Mr. Magoo.* Engel has been a member of the Cal Arts School of Film and Video since 1970 and he has served on the executive board of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the past 30 years. Past recipients of the "Friz" award have been its' namesake Friz Freleng (1995), Stanley Kramer and Joseph Barbera (1996) and Robert Wise and Marc Davis (1997). Engel will be honored at the fourth annual awards banquet on Friday, February 13 at the Odyssey restaurant in Santa Clarita. A retrospective of Jules Engel's work will be screened at the festival, as will other animated programs and shorts. For info. about the dinner or the festival, call (805) 257 3131.

Cinar Gets Parent's Choice. The Parent's Choice Foundation, a non-profit organization which offers reports on children's educational materials, has bestowed several honors to Montreal-based programming producer, Cinar Films. Awards went to four of Cinar's programs, including two animated series based on children's books: *Arthur* (produced with WGBH Boston) and *The Busy World of Richard Scarry.* Parent's Choice president Diana Green acknowledged, "It is rare that we honor one company four times in the same year."

Wendy Jackson is Associate Editor of Animation World Magazine.

DESERT ISLAND SERIES

On A Desert Island With....Movers and Shakers

compiled by Wendy Jackson

This month we asked a few top talents in stop-motion and motion-capture animation to tell us what animated films they would want with them if they were stranded on a desert island. Corky Quakenbush is the creator of more than 15 outrageous clay animation shorts which have aired on the television series MAD TV . Chris Walker is president of motion-capture animation studio Modern Cartoons, a performance animation studio in Venice, California which is currently working on a number of projects for both the European and U.S. market. Barry Purves is a stop-motion animator based in Manchester, England, whose recent credits include the short film, Achilles and pre-production work on Mars Attacks! Both Chris and Corky are admittedly influenced by live-action, and therefore, included their favorite live-action films in the mix. Barry, an avid theater fan, included just animation films.

Corky Quakenbush. Photo © AWN.

Corky Quakenbush's Treasured Films (Corky's getting stranded with an awfully big suitcase...):

Animated Films:

1. *The Big Snit* by Richard Condie.
2. *Gisele Kerosene* by Elsa Cayo.
3. *Harpya* by Raoul Servais.
4. *The Yellow Submarine* directed by George Dunning.
5. *An Inside Job* by Aidan Hickey.
6. *Pinocchio* (Disney).
7. *Allegro Non Troppo* by Bruno Bozzetto.
8. *Media* by Zbigniew Rybczynski.
9. *Neighbors* by Norman McLaren.
10. *The Sandman* by Paul Berry.
11. The collected works of Ray Harryhausen.

Live-Action Films:

1. *Zardoz* (1973) directed by John Boorman.
2. *Pretty Maids All in a Row* (1971) directed by Roger Vadim.
3. *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (1993) directed by Lasse Hallström.
4. *Brewster McCloud* (1970) directed by Robert Altman.
5. *Bliss* (1985) directed by Ray Lawrence (II).
6. *The Tenant* (director unknown).
7. *Apocalypse Now* (1979) directed by Francis Ford Coppola.
8. Collected works of Martin Scorsese.
9. Collected works of Stanley Kubrick.
10. *I Love You, Alice B. Toklas* (1968) directed by Hy Averback.
11. *Harold & Maude* (1971) directed by Hal Ashby.
12. *Greaser's Palace* (1972) directed by Robert Downey Sr.

Chris Walker. Photo courtesy of and © Modern Cartoons.

Chris Walker's Selections:

1. *8 1/2* by Federico Fellini.
2. *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1963) by Stanley Kubrick.
3. *The Unforgiven* (1992) by Clint Eastwood.
4. *Naked Lunch* (1991) by David Cronenberg.
5. *Bambi* (Disney).
6. *Kamikaze Hearts* (1986) directed by Juliet Bashore.
7. *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980) directed by Jamie Uys.
8. *La Puta* by Hayao Miyazaki.
9. *Crimes & Misdemeanors* (1989) by Woody Allen.
10. *Ikiru* (1952) directed by Akira Kurosawa.

Barry Purves. Photo courtesy of and © Bare Boards.

Barry Purves' Picks:

"In haste, but here's my desert island selection. I have restricted it to only animation. A live-action list would be another matter."

1. *Tango* by Zbigniew Rybczynski.
2. *The Hill Farm* by Mark Baker.
3. *La Voix Humaine* (director unknown).
4. *Jason and the Argonauts*, animation by Ray Harryhausen.
5. *The Cat Came Back* by Cordell Barker.
6. *Baron Munchausen* by Karel Zeman.
7. *Dream of a Ridiculous Man* by Alexander Petrov.
8. *One Froggy Evening* by Chuck Jones.
9. *Knick Knack* by John Lasseter.
10. *The Water People* by Paul Driessen.

The Dirty Birdy

The Dirty Birdy
by Dilly ©1997
In your day to day travels
You find yourself in front of many
Some you may have the choice to
Others the choice is made for you
Color by
Gates of Hell

By John Dilworth

The Art of Pre-Production: March 1998

This month we will scrutinize the work that goes on before animation begins...pre-production. The traditional pre-production process for a television show will be presented by Film Roman. LucasArts Entertainment Company will be investigated by Russell Bekins who will lead us through the gaming pre-production process. Karl Cohen will chronicle the life and career of Maurice Noble while Stephen Hagel is going to turn us onto the exciting world of...paper! Kirsten Winter will discuss how she incorporated music into the pre-production of her film Smash. We will also take a look at voice acting. Mae Questel will be profiled by Andrew Lederer and Kath Soucie, a leading voice actress, will take us through her typical busy week.

Event reviews will include Toy Fair in New York City, the International Content Market for Interactive Media (MILIA) in Cannes and the Brussels Cartoon and Animated Film Festival. Of course we will also feature extensive coverage of the World Animation Celebration being held in Pasadena, California. We will also review Piet Kroon's new film T.R.A.N.S.I.T. Book reviews will include Scott Maiko's take on Rick Goldschmidt's new book The Enchanted World of Rankin/Bass. Harvey Deneroff's The Art of Anastasia will be reviewed by Dr. J. Patrice Marandel, the European Painting and Sculpture Curator of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. And finally, this issue will include the very special feature of revered Disney greats, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, discussing with Charles Solomon, Pierre Lambert's book Pinocchio. On the software side of things, we will take a look at Real Flash from two different points of view. Bill Predmore of Pop! Multimedia will discuss using Real Flash from an artistic point of view while Pat Boyle of RealNetworks will discuss how Real Flash fits into the continually developing world of Internet broadcasting.

Animation World Magazine 1998 Calendar

The Art of Pre-Production	*(March)*
Animation in Unexpected Places	*(April)*
Visual Effects and Experimental Animation	*(May)*
Jobs and Education	*(June)*